

JOHN CONSTANTINE™

# HELLBLAZER™

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW



**VERTIGO**

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Mark Buckingham   Bryan Talbot





JOHN CONSTANTINE, HELLBLAZER: THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

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## SEX AND DEATH

FROM HELLBLAZER #10

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## NEWCASTLE: A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

FROM HELLBLAZER #11

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## ON THE BEACH

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## THE BLOODY SAINTS

FROM HELLBLAZER ANNUAL #1

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## VENUS OF THE HARDELL

FROM HELLBLAZER ANNUAL #1

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY DEAN MOTTER

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## ANTARCTICA

FROM THE HORRORIST #1-2

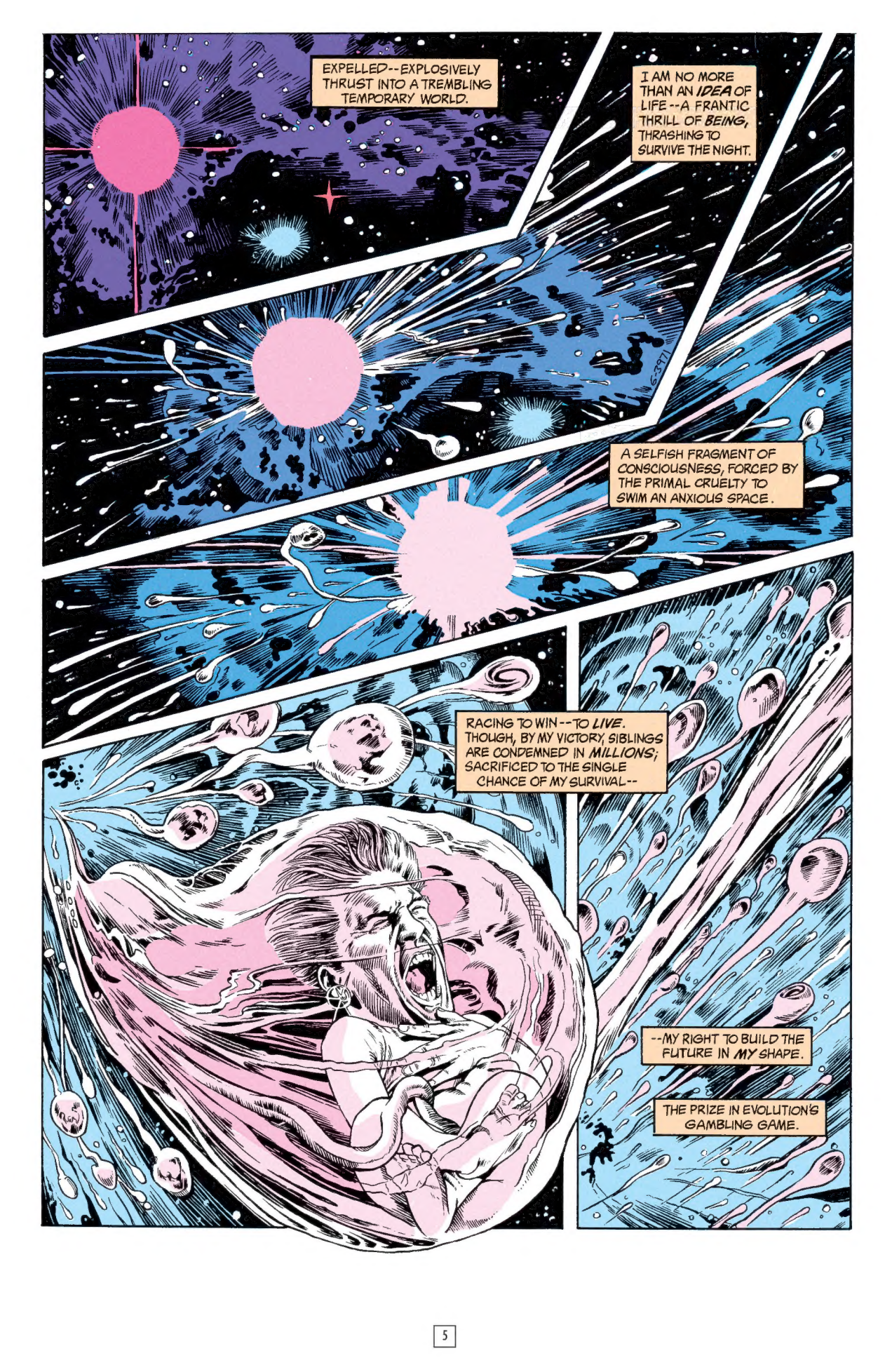
WRITTEN BY JAMIE DELANO • ART AND COVERS BY DAVID LLOYD  
LETTERING BY ELITTA FELL

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EXPULSED--EXPLOSIVELY  
THRUST INTO A TREMBLING  
TEMPORARY WORLD.

I AM NO MORE  
THAN AN *IDEA* OF  
LIFE--A FRANTIC  
THRILL OF *BEING*,  
THRASHING TO  
SURVIVE THE NIGHT.

A SELFISH FRAGMENT OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS, FORCED BY  
THE PRIMAL CRUELTY TO  
SWIM AN ANXIOUS SPACE.

RACING TO WIN--TO *LIVE*.  
THOUGH, BY MY VICTORY, SIBLINGS  
ARE CONDEMNED IN *MILLIONS*;  
SACRIFICED TO THE SINGLE  
CHANCE OF MY SURVIVAL--

--MY RIGHT TO BUILD THE  
FUTURE IN *MY* SHAPE.

THE PRIZE IN EVOLUTION'S  
GAMBLING GAME.



AS ABOVE,  
SO BELOW.

NO GOOD, NO EVIL  
IN THIS PLACE.

NO GUILT.

LIFE'S ONLY DUTY IS SURVIVAL.  
WE ARE ALL GODS OR DEMONS--  
EXERTING THE ENERGY OF WILL  
TO SQUEEZE THE ANARCHIC  
CREATIVITY OF NATURE INTO  
OUR OWN IMAGE.

STIFF MONUMENTS,  
MEMORIAL ONLY TO THE  
POVERTY OF OUR  
IMAGINATIONS.

SO SWIM.  
EMBRACE  
THOUGHT.  
THINK.

THINK WHAT YOU  
ARE--WHAT YOU  
WOULD WISH  
TO BE.

CONSTRUCT YOUR FUTURE.  
MOLD REALITY INTO A  
PLEASING SHAPE.

PUSH ON THROUGH -- BUT KNOW  
THAT ALL THE WORLD IS SUBJECT  
TO THE ARBITRARY RULE OF ...

# "SEX AND DEATH"



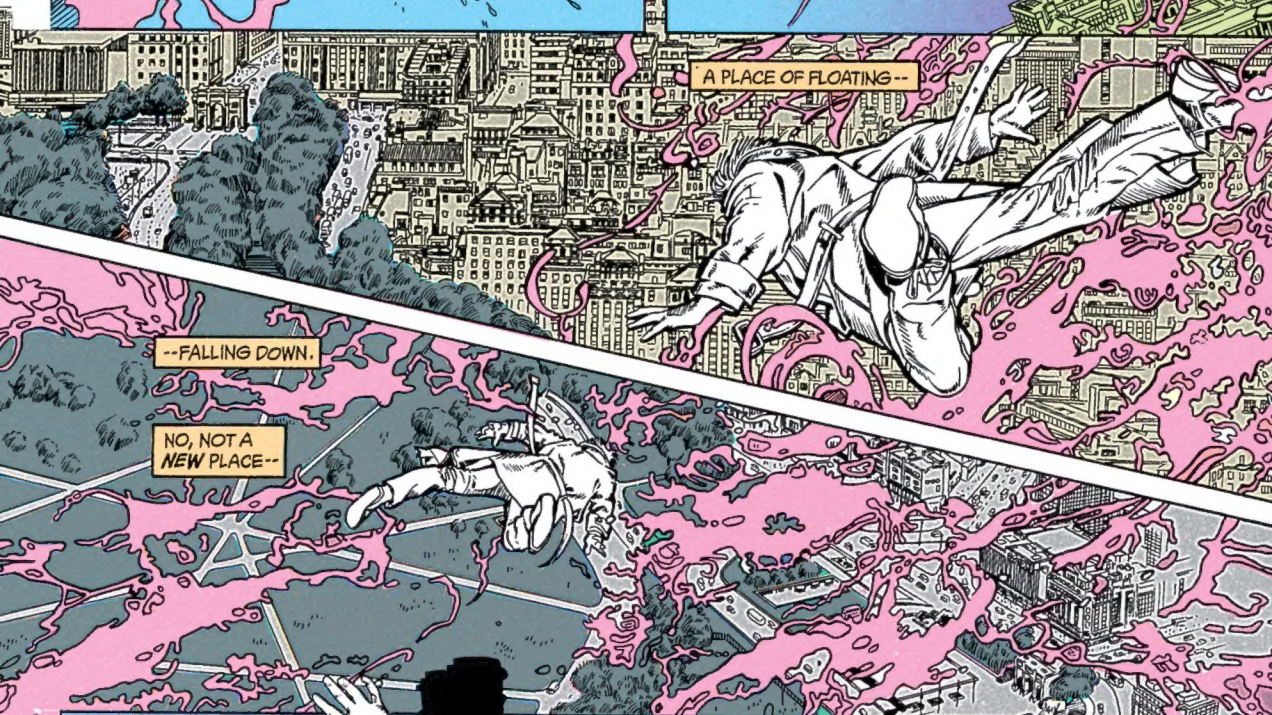


SENSATION.

ECSTATIC  
ELECTRICITY.



ENGULFED IN ROARING  
NEURON TIDES, I SURGE  
INTO A NEW PLACE.



A PLACE OF FLOATING--

--FALLING DOWN.

NO, NOT A  
NEW PLACE--



AN OLD PLACE  
REVISITED--

--SEEN THROUGH  
UNACCLUSTOMED  
EYES.



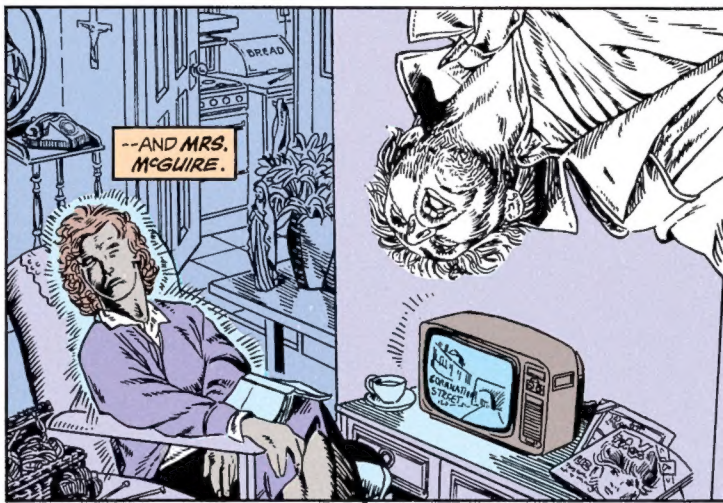


DOWN. DRAGGED  
BY A NAGGING  
WEIGHT OF DOUBT.

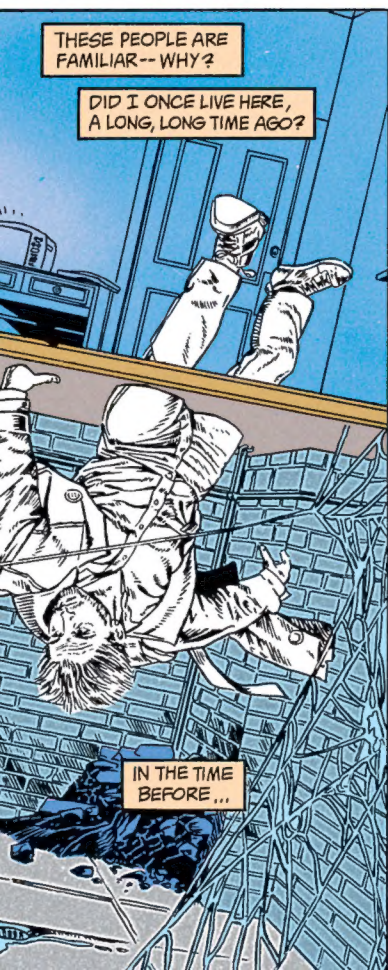
IS THIS A *DREAM*?  
AM I THE DREAM?



DOWN THROUGH THE  
HOUSE. PAST *MIGHTY*  
MOUSE --



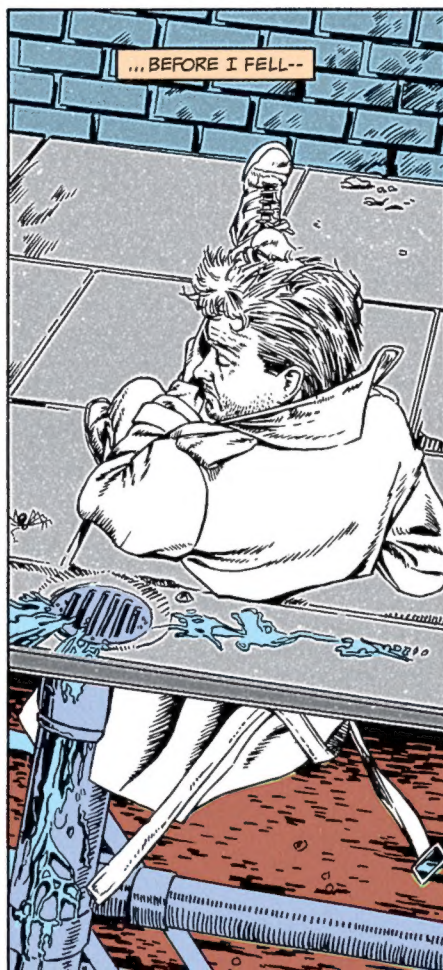
--AND MRS.  
MCGUIRE.



THESE PEOPLE ARE  
FAMILIAR-- WHY?

DID I ONCE LIVE HERE,  
A LONG, LONG TIME AGO?

IN THE TIME  
BEFORE ...



... BEFORE I FELL--

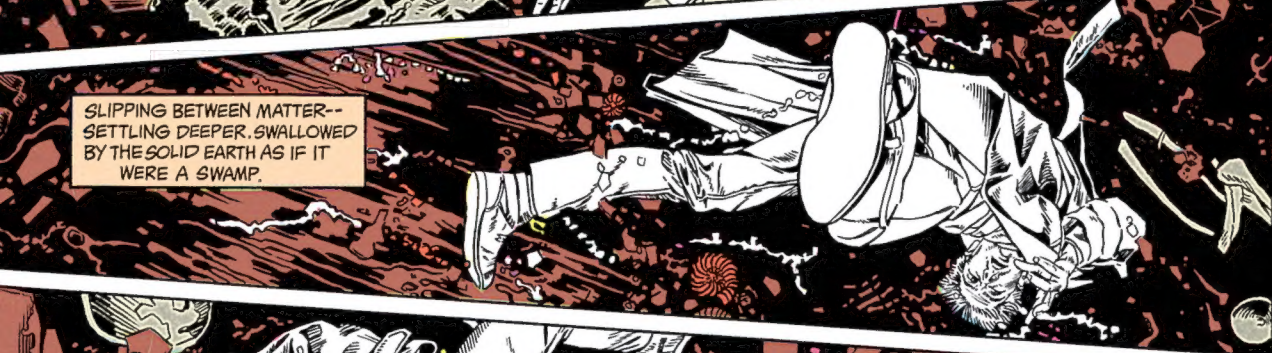


--DOWN.





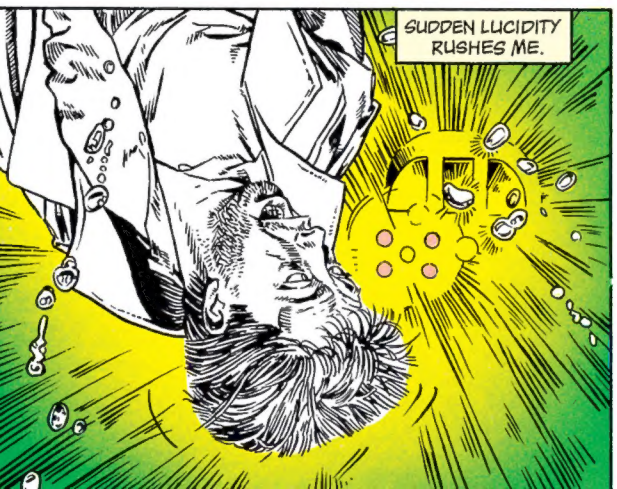
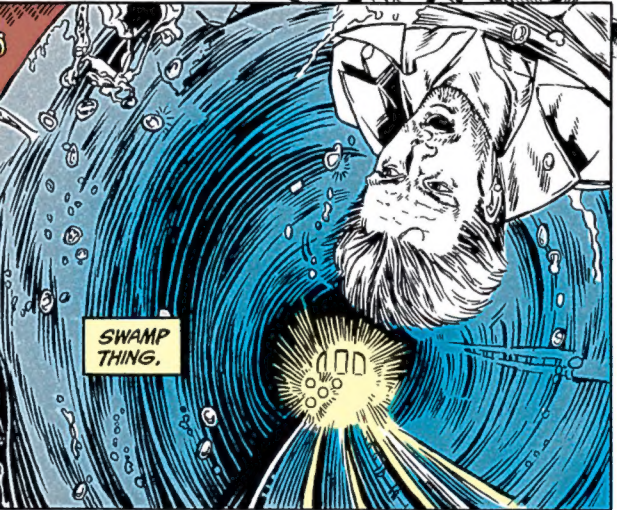
SLIPPING BETWEEN MATTER--  
SETTLING DEEPER. SWALLOWED  
BY THE SOLID EARTH AS IF IT  
WERE A SWAMP.



SWAMP...  
SWAMP...



SWAMP  
THING.



SUDDEN LUCIDITY  
RUSHES ME.



CHRIST! THE BIG GREEN  
BASTARD'S KILLED ME.



CEMENTED BY A SLOW  
RESENTMENT, MEMORY  
REASSEMBLES.

I AM IN THE ASTRAL DIMENSIONS--  
BUT I'M NOT DEAD. HE DIDN'T  
KILL ME--JUST RIPPED OFF MY  
BODY AND FIRED ME INTO THE  
ETHEREAL REALM, LIKE HE WAS  
TOSSEING OUT THE GARBAGE.

BLOODY LUCKY I KEPT IT  
TOGETHER ENOUGH TO GET  
BACK INTO MY ASTRAL FORM.  
S'POSE THE OLD DREAM  
TRAINING CAME IN USEFUL THERE.

THE SUPRA-PHYSICAL  
REALMS ARE A BIT LIKE  
DREAMS -- BUT MORE  
INDEPENDENT.

ACCESSING THE SUB-  
CONSCIOUS IS THE  
KEY TO CONTROL.

IT'S A BIT BLEEDIN' RICH THOUGH, ENNIT?  
NO WARNING, NO "BY YOUR LEAVE..." I COULD'VE  
BEEN SCATTERED FROM ARSE-HOLE TO BREAKFASTIME.

IT'S NOT EVEN AS IF I WASN'T GOING TO OFFER.

I THOUGHT I WOULD DO  
THE GREAT GREEN GILBERT  
A FAVOR--A CIVILIZED  
AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
GENTLEMEN, LIKE.

I LEND HIM MY PERFECT BODY SO HE  
CAN INDULGE IN A BIT OF RUMPY-PUMPY  
WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND--AND HE GETS  
TO PLANT HIS *SPROUT* ELEMENTAL IN  
FERTILE EARTH, AS IT WERE.

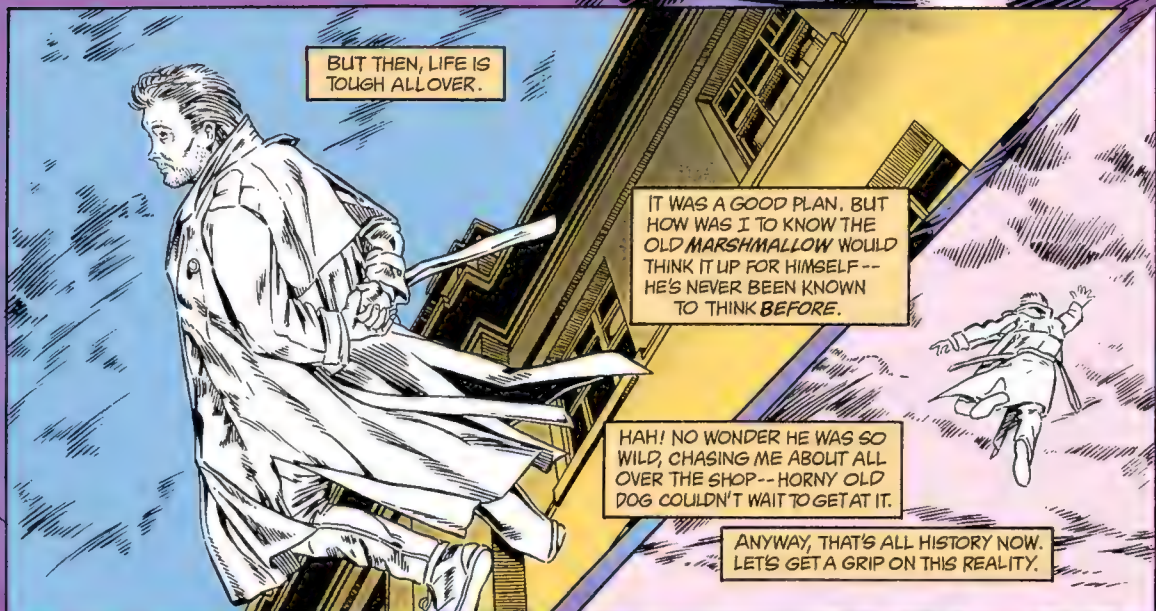
THE *PROPHECY* GETS  
FULFILLED. THE RESURREC-  
TION CRUSADERS GET  
STOPPED. THE *DEMON*  
GETS IT IN THE EAR. I  
GET THE *CREDIT*--  
AND ABBY...

...ABBY GETS  
PREGNANT.









BUT THEN, LIFE IS  
TOUGH ALLOVER.

IT WAS A GOOD PLAN. BUT  
HOW WAS I TO KNOW THE  
OLD MARSHMALLOW WOULD  
THINK IT UP FOR HIMSELF --  
HE'S NEVER BEEN KNOWN  
TO THINK BEFORE.

HAH! NO WONDER HE WAS SO  
WILD, CHASING ME ABOUT ALL  
OVER THE SHOP -- HORNY OLD  
DOG COULDN'T WAIT TO GET AT IT.

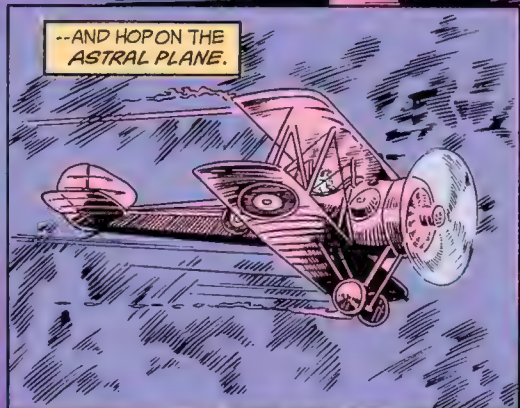
ANYWAY, THAT'S ALL HISTORY NOW.  
LET'S GET A GRIP ON THIS REALITY.



I NEED TO KNOW IF THE CRAPPY  
STUNT I PULLED ON ZED HAS  
PAID OFF IN GLASTONBURY.



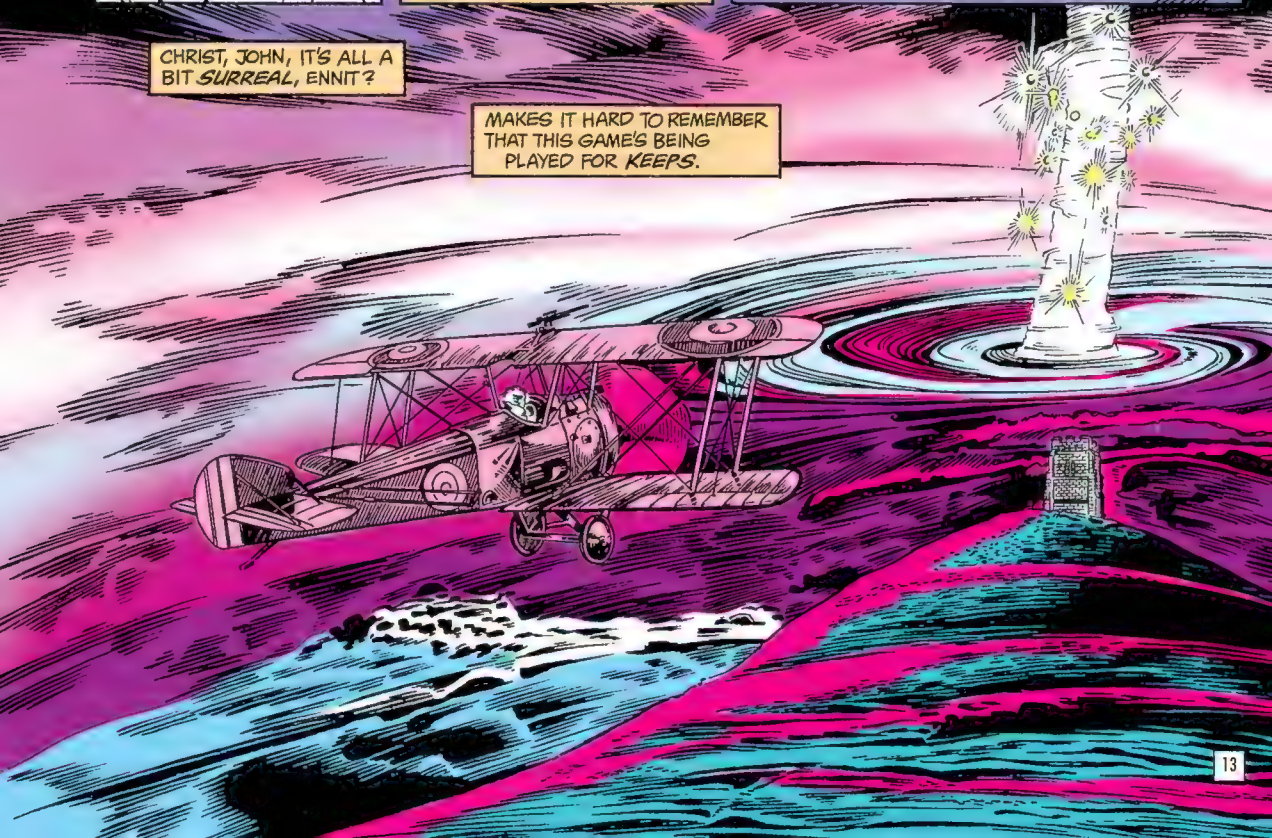
IT SHOULD BE EASY TO GET THERE.  
JUST APPLY DREAM LOGIC--



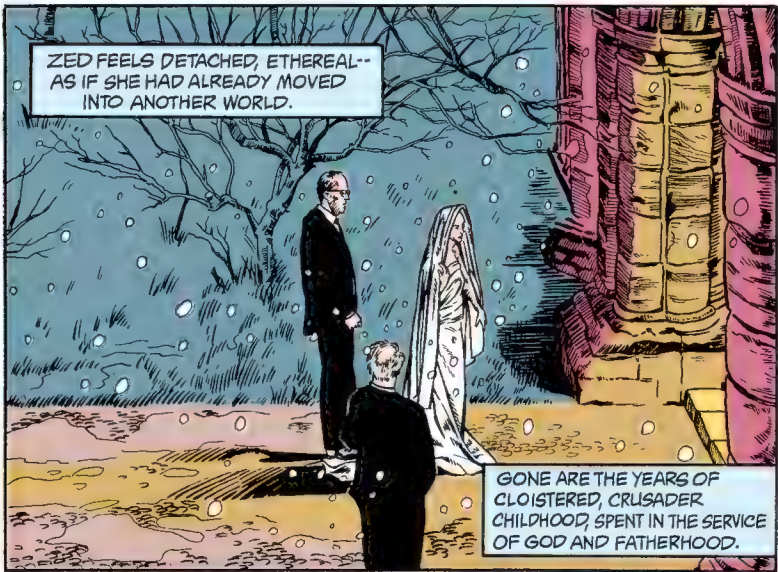
--AND HOP ON THE  
ASTRAL PLANE.

CHRIST, JOHN, IT'S ALL A  
BIT SURREAL, ENNIT?

MAKES IT HARD TO REMEMBER  
THAT THIS GAME'S BEING  
PLAYED FOR KEEPS.

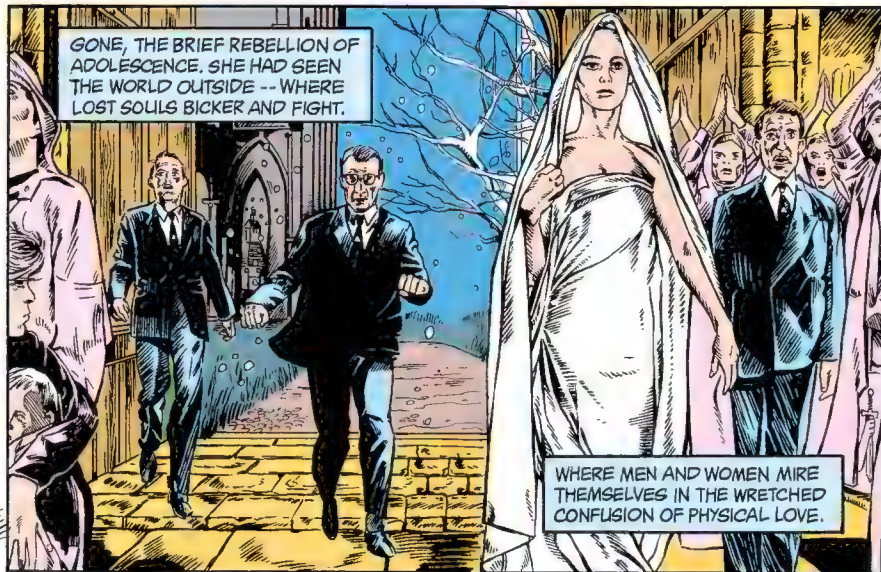






ZED FEELS DETACHED, ETHEREAL--  
AS IF SHE HAD ALREADY MOVED  
INTO ANOTHER WORLD.

GONE ARE THE YEARS OF  
CLOISTERED, CRUSADER  
CHILDHOOD, SPENT IN THE SERVICE  
OF GOD AND FATHERHOOD.

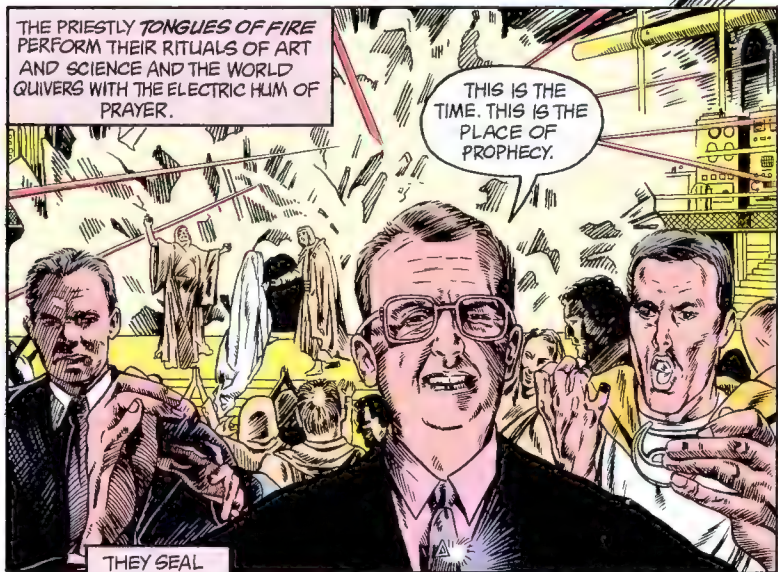


GONE, THE BRIEF REBELLION OF  
ADOLESCENCE. SHE HAD SEEN  
THE WORLD OUTSIDE -- WHERE  
LOST SOULS BICKER AND FIGHT.

WHERE MEN AND WOMEN MIRE  
THEMSELVES IN THE WRETCHED  
CONFUSION OF PHYSICAL LOVE.



GUIDED BY THE HANDS OF WISDOM,  
SHE HAS RETURNED HOME -- COME  
AT LAST TO THE PROMISE OF HER  
DESTINY.



THE PRIESTLY TONGUES OF FIRE  
PERFORM THEIR RITUALS OF ART  
AND SCIENCE AND THE WORLD  
QUIVERS WITH THE ELECTRIC HUM OF  
PRAYER.

THIS IS THE  
TIME. THIS IS THE  
PLACE OF  
PROPHECY.

THEY SEAL  
HER IN THE  
CRYSTAL ARK--

THIS IS THE  
CHILD--OUR DAUGHTER.  
THIS IS THE WOMAN.

AND, ON THE HOUR, OPEN  
HEAVEN'S GATE--

THIS IS  
THE MARY.



--SO SHE CAN MATE  
WITH ANGELS.



THE HOLY ENTOURAGE DESCENDS --



--AND THE ANGELIC LOVER  
APPROACHES, TOUCHING HER  
WITH JOY, BATHING HER IN  
UNBEARABLE ECSTASY--



--MOVING TO CONSUME  
HER AND FILL HER WITH  
GORGEOUS LIGHT.



BUT, AS GLORY LAYS UP AGAINST HER SOUL, A GHASTLY MOUTH OF DREAD SUCKS AT HER HAPPINESS-- AND THE ANGEL CONVULSES, SQUIRMING IN AN ELASTIC CONTRACTION OF LOATHING.

--AS IF FROM POISON, OR THE ROTTEN BLIGHT OF HELL.

SHE FEELS ITS REVULSION. WRENCHED BY SPASMS OF DISGUST, IT CHOKES AND THRASHES-- PANICKING TO WITHDRAW--

IT FAILS. IT TURNS FROM HER.

WE ARE BETRAYED. SHE WAS UNFIT TO BE THE CHALICE OF THE LORD.

EEEEEEYAH!

YAAAAH!

DISHONOR. DISHONOR. NOW WE MUST FACE THE AWFUL WRATH OF GOD.



THERE IS A SOUND, AS IF THE  
UNIVERSE GROWLED WITH ANGER.

THERE IS CATACLYSM--AND DEATH.

DESTRUCTION CASTS FRACTURED  
SHARDS OF REALITY ACROSS  
DIMENSIONS.

I AM THE TERRORIST WHO PLANTED  
THE BOMB. I SPIT IN THE EYE OF GOD  
AND LAUGH IN THE FACE OF HELL.

SHE PRAYS FOR THE  
WORLD TO SWALLOW  
HER SHAME--TO BURY  
HER DEEP, WITH NO  
MONUMENT.

TO GRIND HER VILE  
FLESH AND BONE  
INTO A PASTE.

FOR SECONDS, CALAMITY  
IS AN END IN ITSELF. THEN  
I SEE A *SPY* AND  
REMEMBER THE DEMON--  
AND THE PLAN.

BUT GOD IS JUST.  
AND JUSTICE IS CRUEL.



YOU DID THIS, CONSTANTINE. YOU  
KILLED HER-- CONDEMNED HER TO  
INSANE DEATH, LIKE ALL THESE  
SORRY BASTARDS.



DONE NOW, THOUGH. HAD TO BE.  
HUMANITY WOULD'VE BECOME THE  
SLAVES OF HEAVEN.



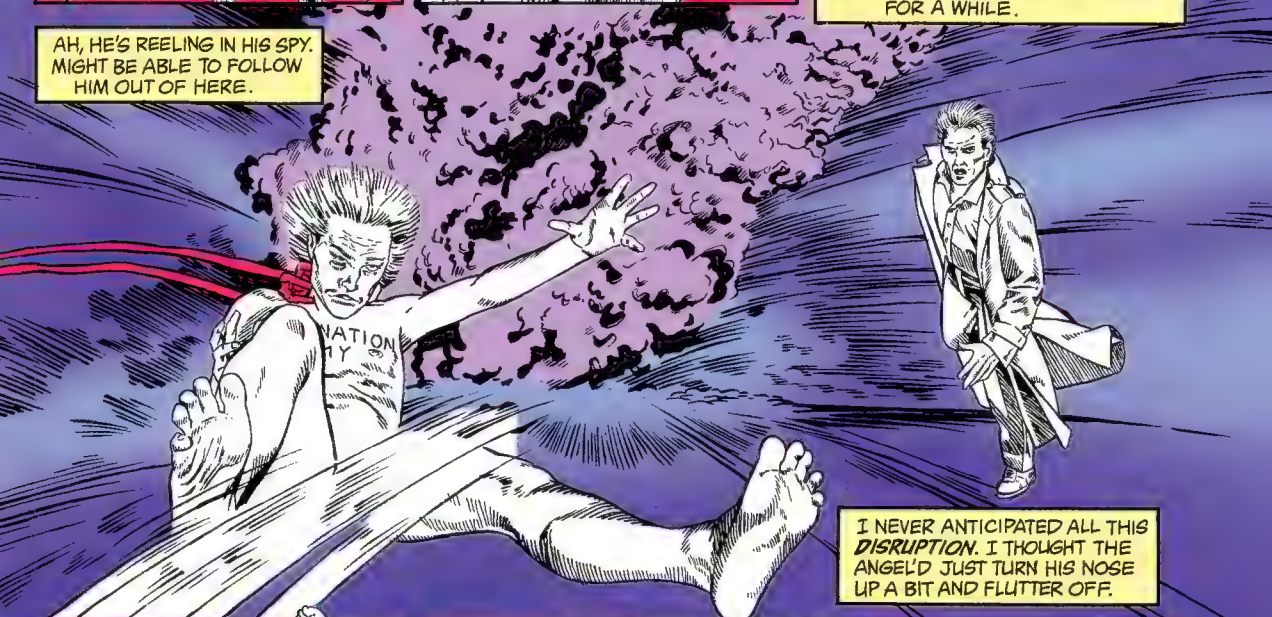
DIDN'T HAVE  
ANY CHOICE,  
REALLY--

--DID I...?

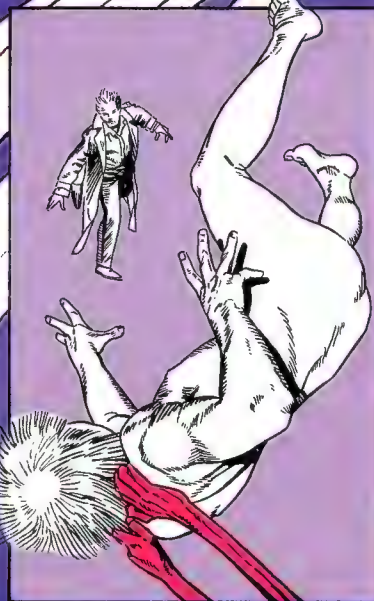


THAT DEMON'S GOING TO BE ON CLOUD  
NINE. HE'LL THINK I'VE DROPPED THE  
WHOLE BLOODY ISSUE RIGHT IN HIS LAP--  
FOR A WHILE.

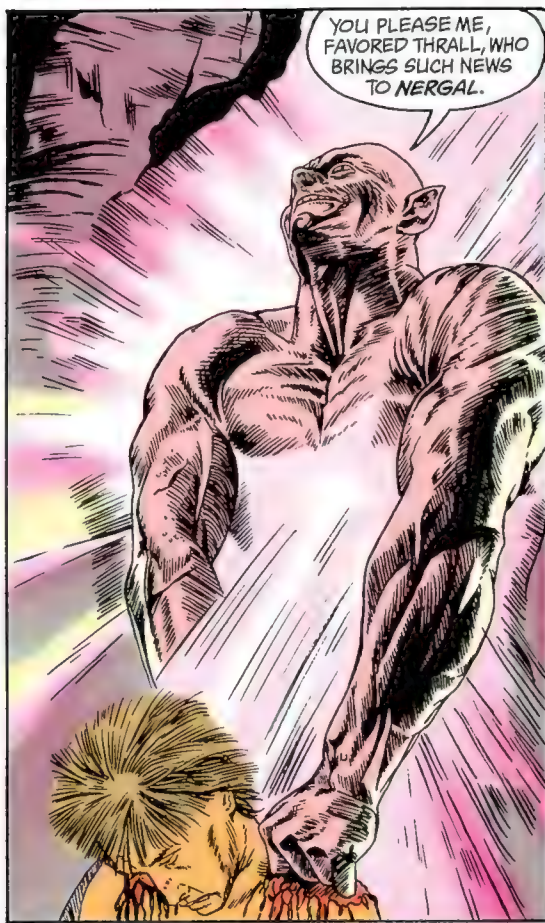
AH, HE'S REELING IN HIS SPY.  
MIGHT BE ABLE TO FOLLOW  
HIM OUT OF HERE.



I NEVER ANTICIPATED ALL THIS  
DISRUPTION. I THOUGHT THE  
ANGEL'D JUST TURN HIS NOSE  
UP A BIT AND FLUTTER OFF.





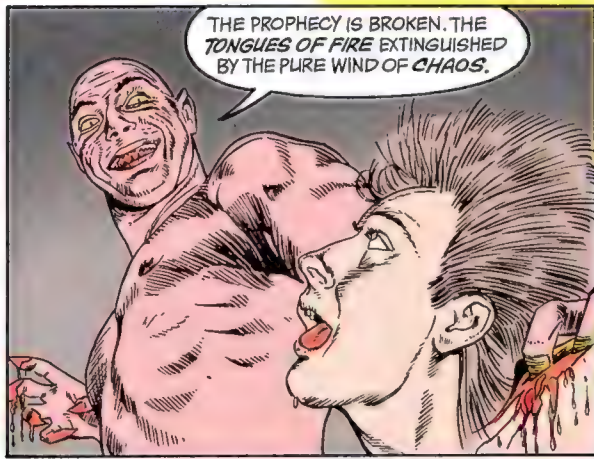


YOU PLEASE ME,  
FAVORED THRALL, WHO  
BRINGS SUCH NEWS  
TO NERGA.



LISTEN, HEAR VAIN HEAVEN RANT  
AND SHAKE THE FIRMAMENT.

REJOICE TO THE  
SWEET SOUND OF  
ANGELS HOWLING  
IN THE VOID.



THE PROPHECY IS BROKEN. THE  
TONGUES OF FIRE EXTINGUISHED  
BY THE PURE WIND OF CHAOS.



ALL FALL  
BEFORE ME.

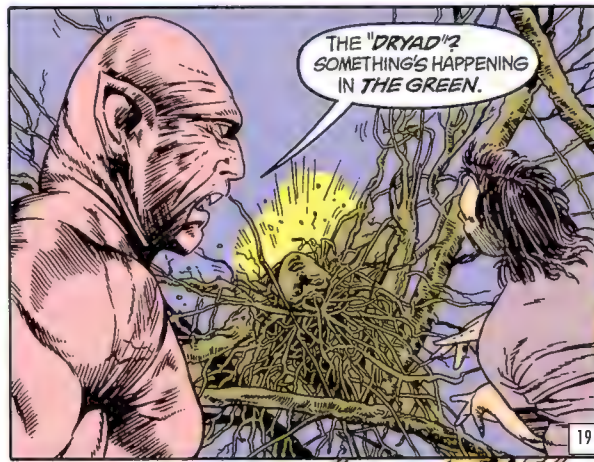
MY PERFECT STRATEGY HAS BROUGHT  
US VICTORY. HELL IS ASCENDANT.  
THIS WORLD IS *MINE*.



CONSTANTINE WAS THE IDEAL WEAPON.  
CUNNING, RESOURCEFUL--BUT *STUPID*.  
TRYING TO OUTWIT ME, HE SERVED  
ME NONETHELESS.

NNNG!

WHAT?

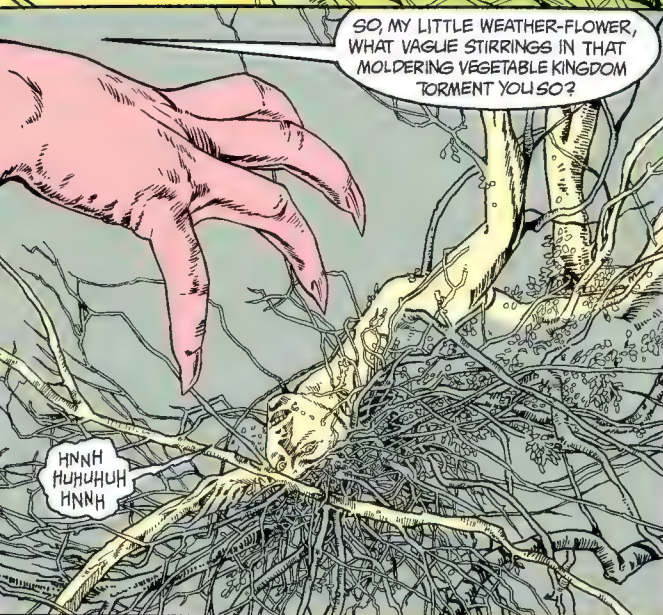


THE "DRYAD"?  
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING  
IN THE GREEN.









SO, MY LITTLE WEATHER-FLOWER,  
WHAT VAGUE STIRRINGS IN THAT  
MOLDERING VEGETABLE KINGDOM  
TORMENT YOU SO?

HHNH  
HUHUHUH  
HHNH



WHAT? SUCH ENERGY.  
THE CELLULOSE REALM IS  
**SEETHING**-- BURNING WITH  
A ROTTEN, FECUND HEAT.

BUT WHY...?



HOLD STILL. LET ME  
READ YOUR ROOT NODES.

IT MAY BE PERTINENT. IN SUCH  
TIMES OF CATAclysm EVEN THE  
**ELEMENTALS** MUST BE MOVED.



AAAAHHHH!  
CONSTANTINE!

YOU HAVE  
**BETRAYED** ME.  
THE SWAMP THING  
**MATES!** THE PROPHECY  
IS FULFILLED,  
THROUGH YOU!



I KNOW  
YOU'RE OUT THERE.  
I CAN **SMELL** YOU.

YOU CANNOT KNOW  
WHAT YOU HAVE DONE--  
WHAT **TORMENTS** YOU  
HAVE CLAIMED BY  
THIS.



FOR YOU, AN ETERNITY  
OF AGONY AND FEAR  
BEGINS--

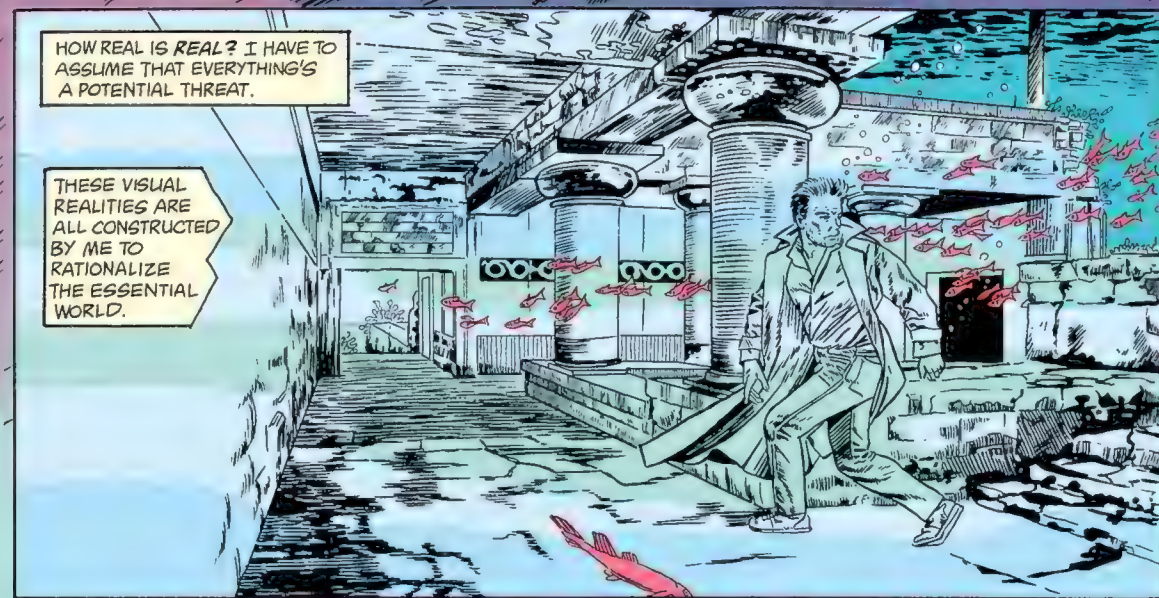
--NOW.





RUN, CONSTANTINE.  
MY HELL-HOUNDS WILL  
RETRIEVE YOUR SOUL--

--IN MOUTHFULS!



HOW REAL IS REAL? I HAVE TO  
ASSUME THAT EVERYTHING'S  
A POTENTIAL THREAT.

THESE VISUAL  
REALITIES ARE  
ALL CONSTRUCTED  
BY ME TO  
RATIONALIZE  
THE ESSENTIAL  
WORLD.



CHRIST! WHY'D IT HAVE TO BE  
BLOODY DOGS?

I'LL NEVER  
OUTRUN THEM.



MAYBE I CAN PUT  
THEM OFF THE SCENT  
BY SWIMMING.



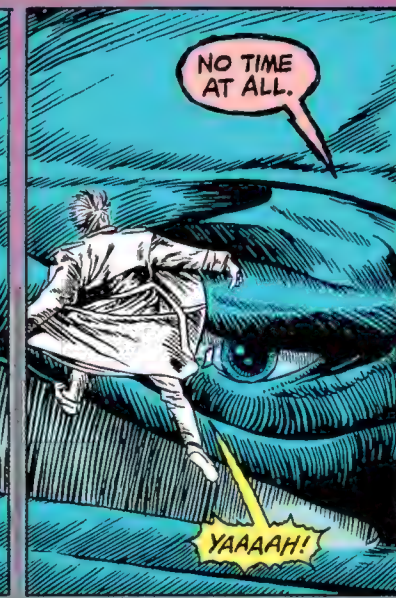
STRENGTH. NOW WHERE AM I?  
THIS ASTRAL DIMENSION'S BLOODY  
WEIRD--AND DANGEROUS. I  
DON'T KNOW WHAT RULES APPLY.



FASCINATING-- BUT PLAYING STALK  
AND SLASH WITH DEMONS ISN'T THE  
MOST RELAXING WAY TO EXPLORE A  
NEW ENVIRONMENT.

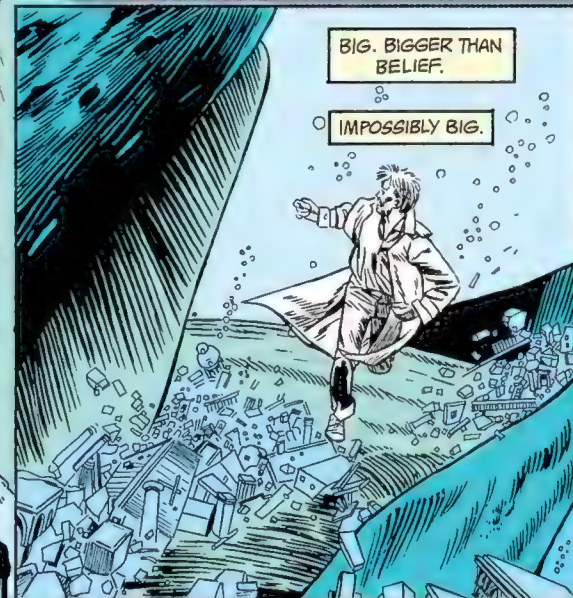


WONDER HOW LONG IT'LL  
TAKE THE BASTARD TO  
FIND ME HERE.



NO TIME  
AT ALL.

YAAAAAH!



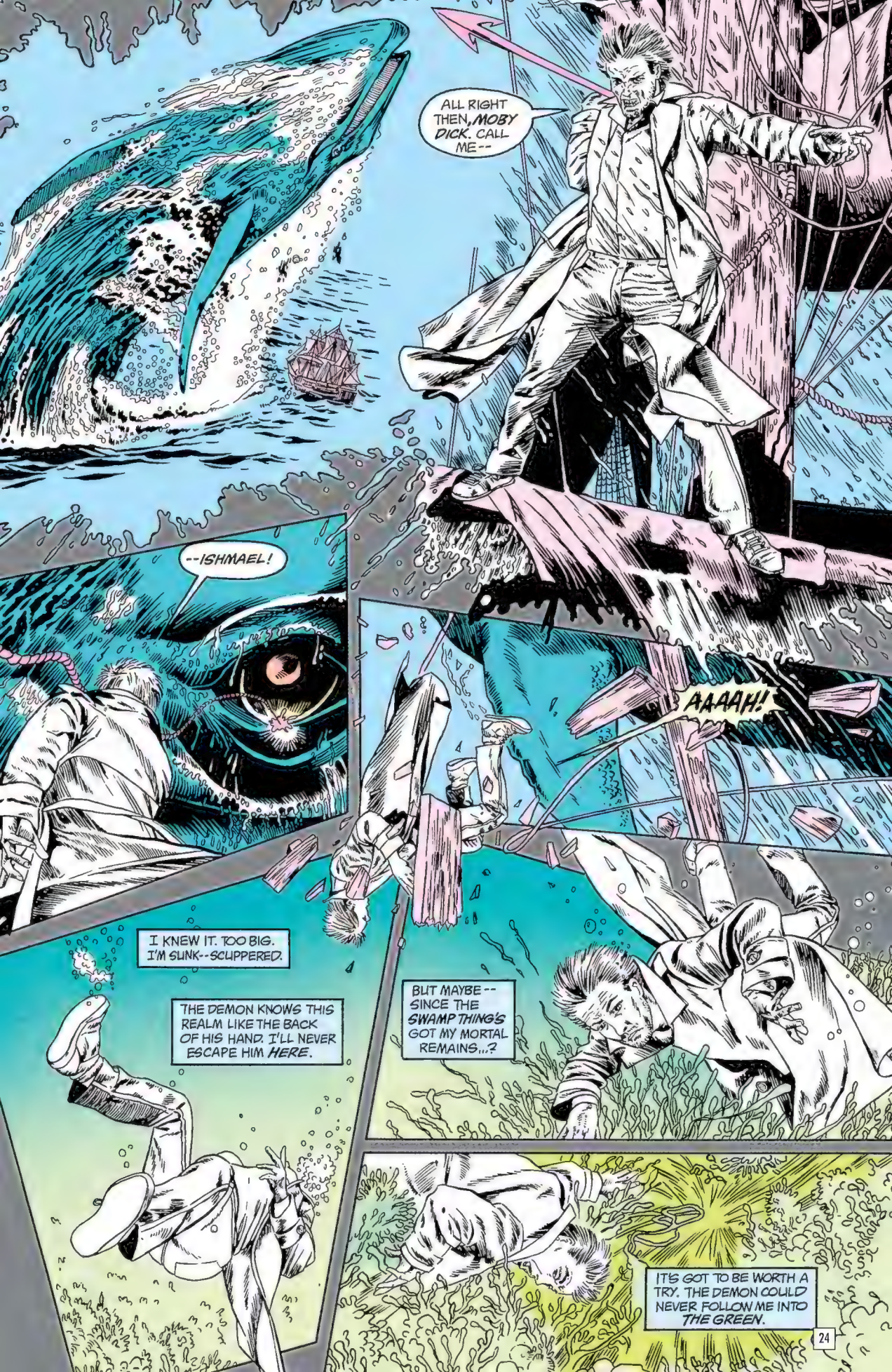
BIG. BIGGER THAN  
BELIEF.

IMPOSSIBLY BIG.



HOW THE HELL DO  
YOU FIGHT A WHALE?





ALL RIGHT THEN, MOBY DICK. CALL ME--

--ISHMAEL!

AAAAH!

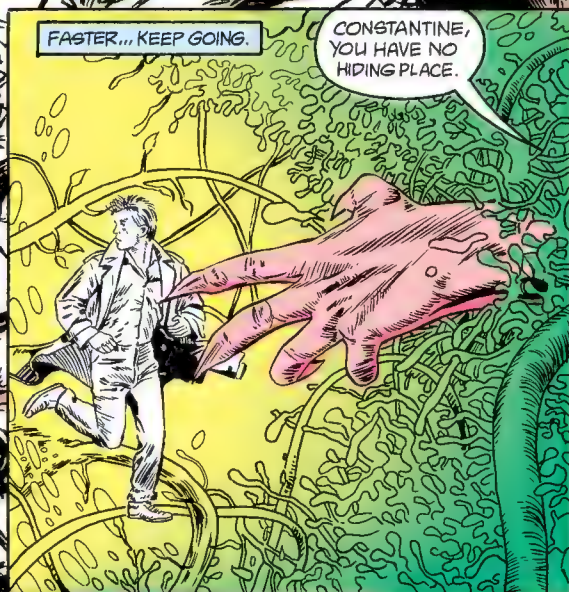
I KNEW IT. TOO BIG. I'M SUNK--SCUPPERED.

THE DEMON KNOWS THIS REALM LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND. I'LL NEVER ESCAPE HIM HERE.

BUT MAYBE -- SINCE THE SWAMP THING'S GOT MY MORTAL REMAINS...?

IT'S GOT TO BE WORTH A TRY. THE DEMON COULD NEVER FOLLOW ME INTO THE GREEN.





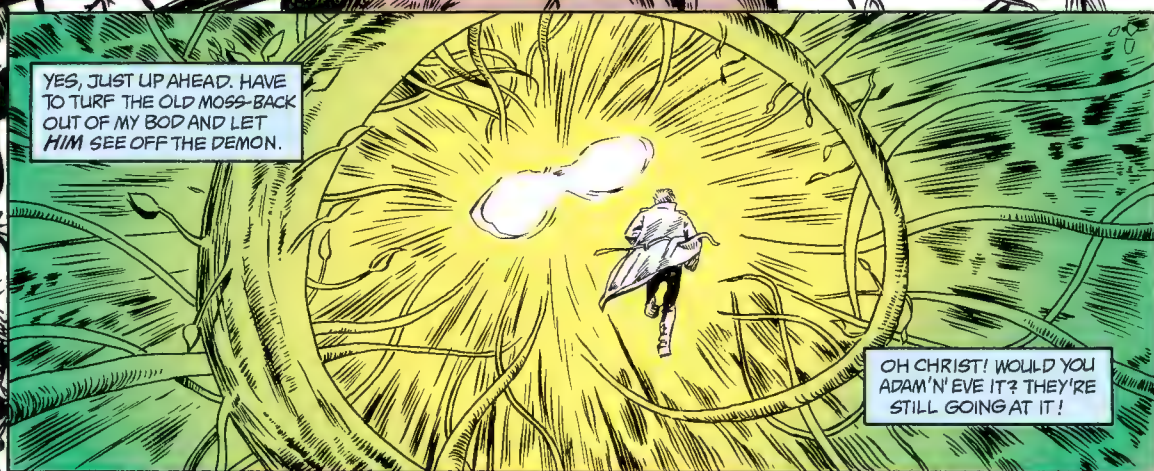
FASTER... KEEP GOING.

CONSTANTINE,  
YOU HAVE NO  
HIDING PLACE.



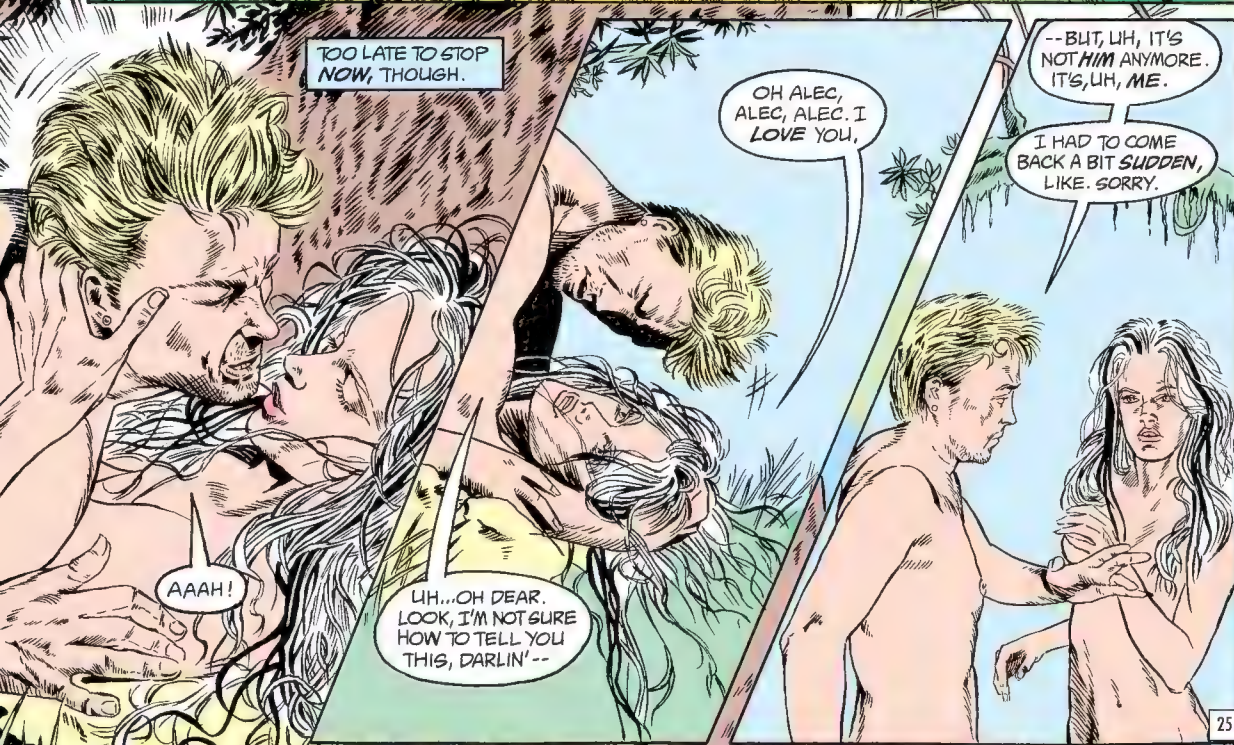
WHETHER IN THIS REALM,  
OR ANOTHER--I SHALL DEPRIVE  
YOU UNTO *ETERNITY*.

NEARLY THERE.



YES, JUST UP AHEAD. HAVE  
TO TURF THE OLD MOSS-BACK  
OUT OF MY BOB AND LET  
*HIM* SEE OFF THE DEMON.

OH CHRIST! WOULD YOU  
ADAM'N'EVE IT? THEY'RE  
STILL GOING AT IT!



TOO LATE TO STOP  
NOW, THOUGH.

OH ALEC,  
ALEC, ALEC. I  
LOVE YOU,

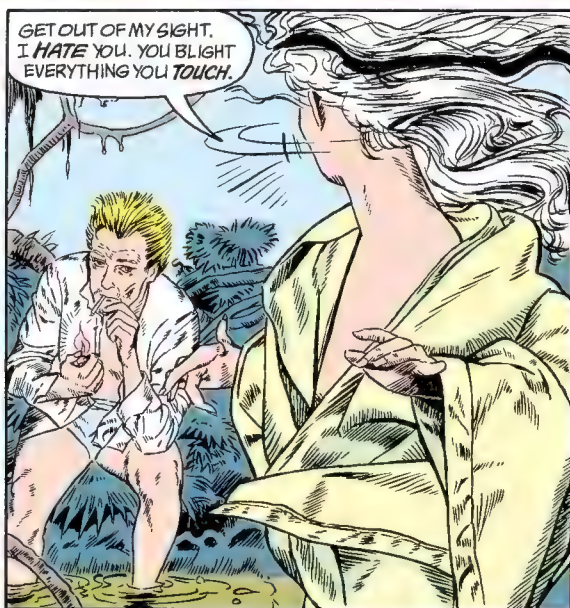
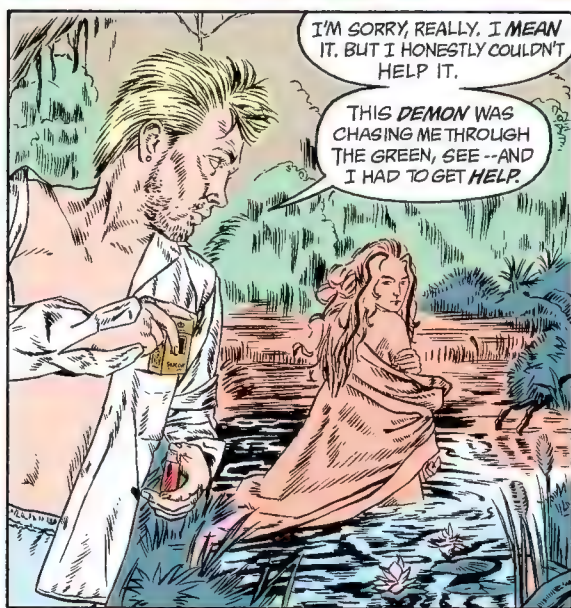
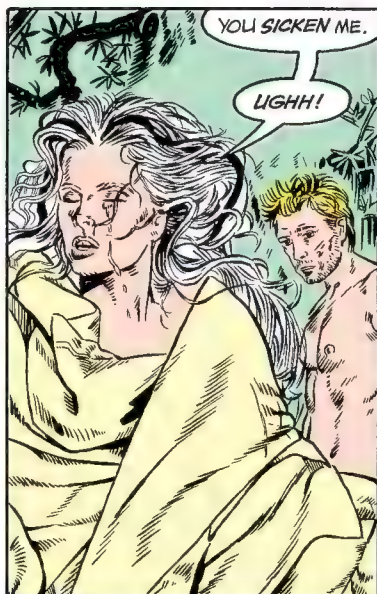
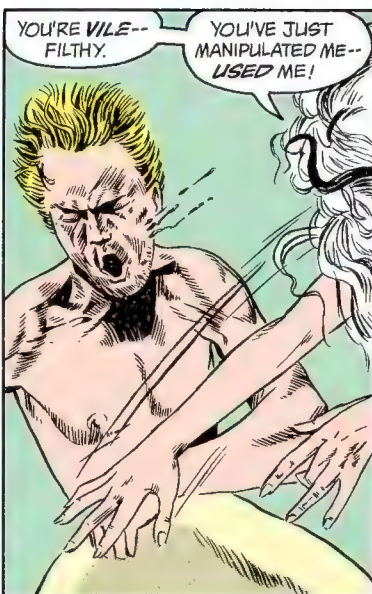
-- BUT, UH, IT'S  
NOT *HIM* ANYMORE.  
IT'S, UH, ME.

I HAD TO COME  
BACK A BIT SUDDEN.  
LIKE. SORRY.

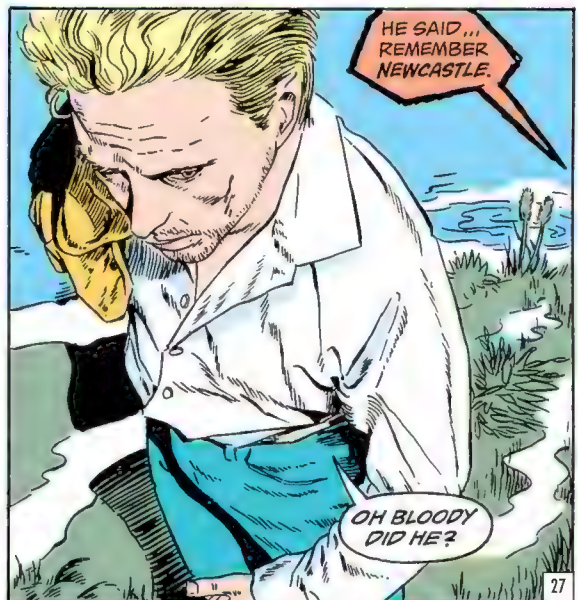
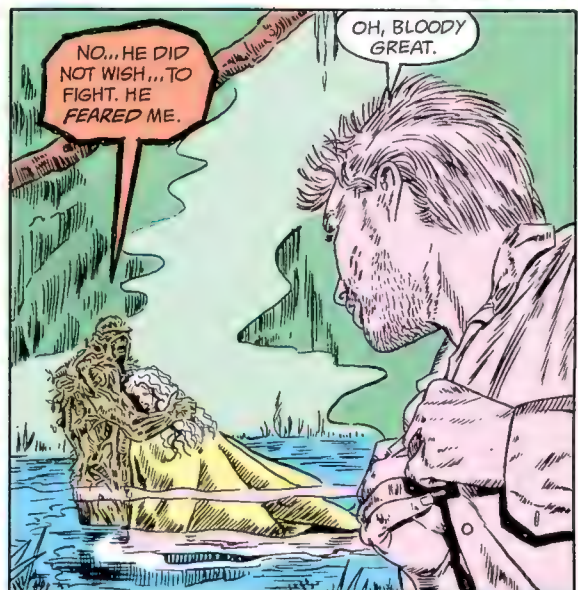
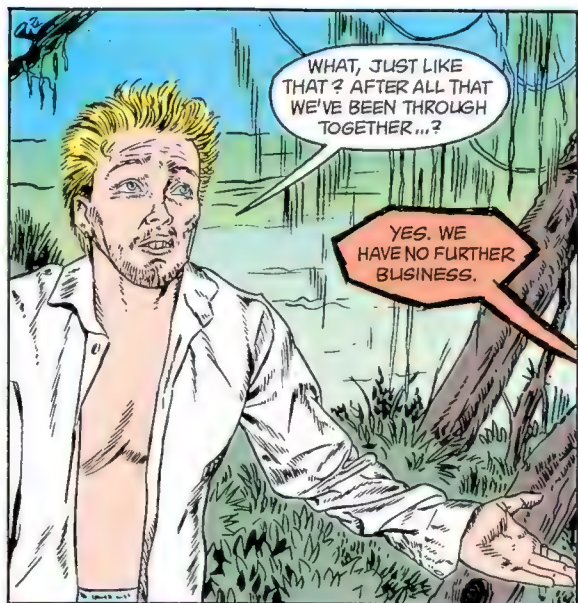
AAAH!

UH...OH DEAR.  
LOOK, I'M NOT SURE  
HOW TO TELL YOU  
THIS, DARLIN' --

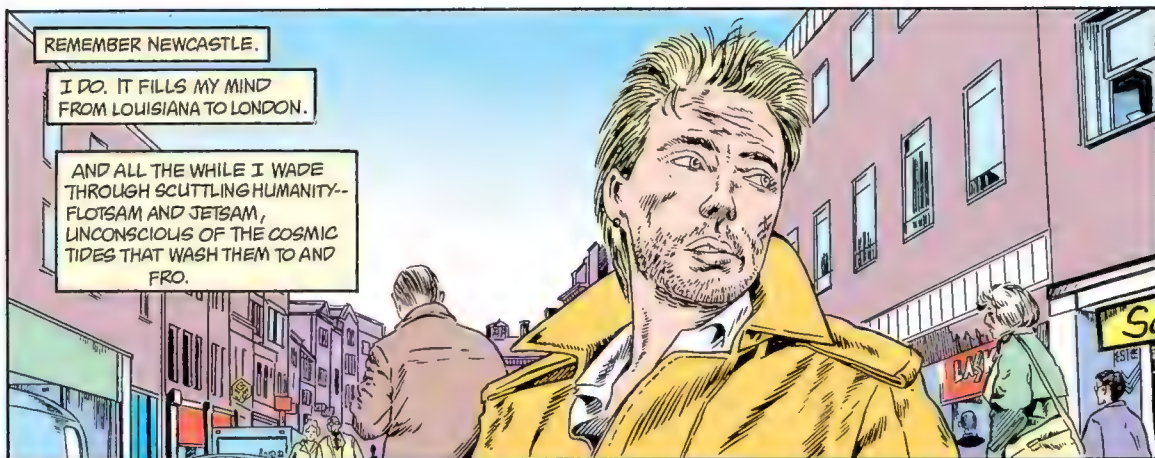












REMEMBER NEWCASTLE.

I DO. IT FILLS MY MIND  
FROM LOUISIANA TO LONDON.

AND ALL THE WHILE I WADE  
THROUGH SCUTTILING HUMANITY--  
FLOTSAM AND JETSAM,  
UNCONSCIOUS OF THE COSMIC  
TIDES THAT WASH THEM TO AND  
FRO.



AM I *INSANE* TO CARE WHAT  
HAPPENS TO THESE STUPID *SHEEP*?  
IS IT SOME PSYCHOTIC ARROGANCE  
THAT DRIVES ME TO SAVE MY  
SPECIES FROM ITSELF?



IS IT AN IMPULSE OF SELF-DESTRUCTION THAT  
LEADS ME TO CONJURE DEMONS AND OPPOSE  
THEM?

OR IS IT  
*RAGE*?



REMEMBER NEWCASTLE, HE SAID, AND  
SLAPPED ME WITH A SUDDEN CHILL OF  
ANGER WHICH NOW GROWS TENTACLES  
THROUGH ME, LIKE *CANCER*, OR *DEATH*.



REMEMBER  
NEWCASTLE.

I WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN HIM  
CREDIT FOR SUCH SUBTLETY--  
BUT THESE TWO WORDS TOUCH  
ME AS PRECISELY AS A DENTIST'S  
STEEL PROBING THE EXPOSED  
PULP OF A MOLAR NERVE.



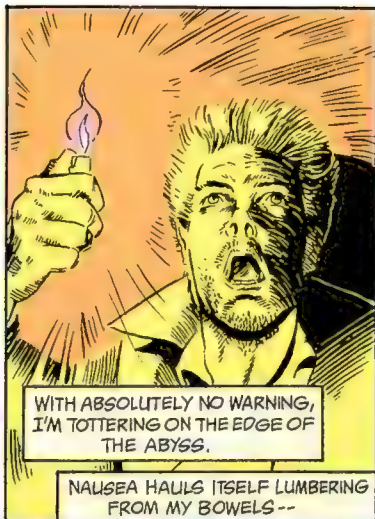
BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT REFINEMENTS  
A TORTURER MIGHT BRING TO HIS ART  
WHEN HE'S HAD ETERNITY TO PRACTICE.

IT'S ALL  
RIGHT, MRS. M.  
IT'S ONLY  
ME.

SNIK

DAMN,  
BULB'S  
GONE.





WITH ABSOLUTELY NO WARNING,  
I'M TOTTERING ON THE EDGE OF  
THE ABYSS.

NAUSEA HAULS ITSELF LUMBERING  
FROM MY BOWELS --



--AND ROARS.

IN A LANDSLIDE OF UNDERSTANDING,  
THE WHOLE WORLD CHANGES SHAPE.

STRANGELY, IT IS THE GROTESQUE CARNAGE  
WROUGHT WITH THE CORPSES OF MRS.  
MC GUIRE AND MIGHTY MOUSE THAT  
ANCHORS ME IN REALITY AS WAVES OF  
EMOTION FLOOD AND PUMMEL ME.



THEN THE APPALLING TRUTH CLEAVES  
TO ME. HOW DID I NOT SEE IT BEFORE?

CHRIST, HE EVEN SPELLED IT OUT,  
BOASTED ABOUT IT--HE PLAYED  
WITH ME.



NERGAL, NERGAL,  
NERGAL.

I KNOW YOU  
NOW, YOU  
BASTARD!





CLOSED IN THE RUINS  
OF MY ROOM, IT SEEMS  
GRAVITY INCREASES  
ITS GRIP ON ME,  
FOCUSING ALL MY  
ENERGY INWARD --



--ENGULFING THE NEBULOUS FIRE  
OF ANGER IN MY BLACK, PULSATING  
HEART--

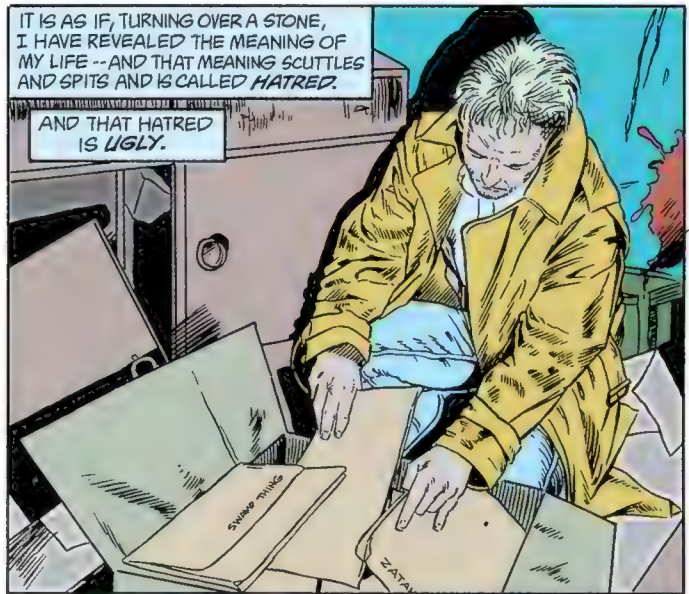


IT IS AS IF, TURNING OVER A STONE,  
I HAVE REVEALED THE MEANING OF  
MY LIFE --AND THAT MEANING SCUTTLES  
AND SPITS AND IS CALLED **HATRED**.

AND THAT HATRED  
IS **UGLY**.



--SQUEEZING IT REMORSELESSLY  
INTO GLITTERING DIAMONDS OF  
PURE, MATHEMATICAL FURY.



AND THAT HATRED  
IS **BEAUTIFUL**.



IF HE COULD READ MY MIND--DEMON OR NO--  
HE WOULD BE AFRAID.

I OWE HIM A MONSTROUS DEBT, AND I  
SWEAR --BETWEEN THE DESPAIR OF HEAVEN  
AND THE HOPE OF HELL--THAT DEBT WILL  
BE PAID IN **FULL**.

NEWCASTLE 1978

NEXT: **NEWCASTLE**

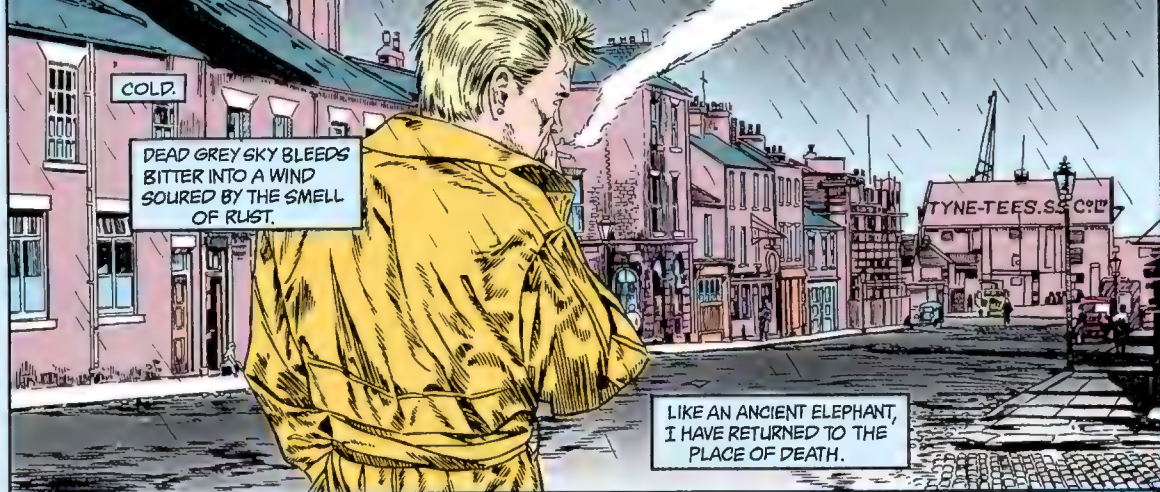




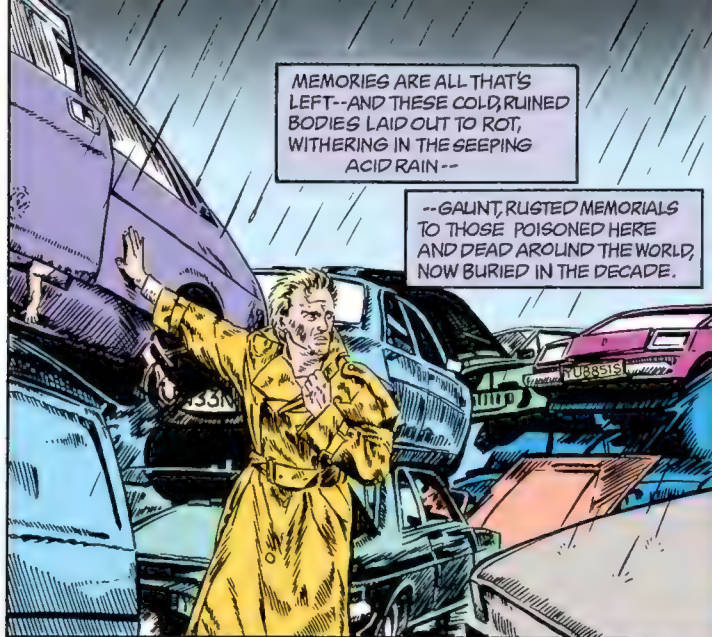






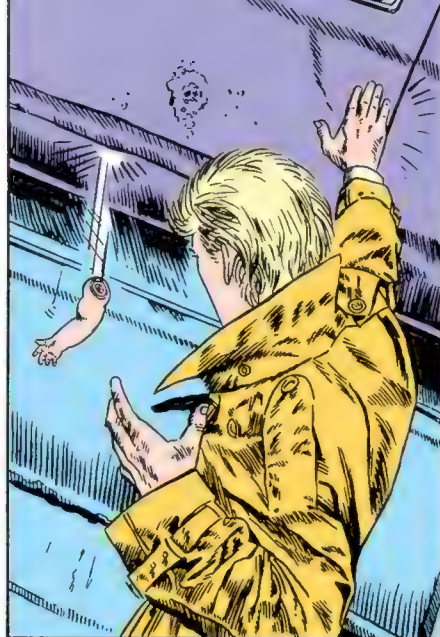






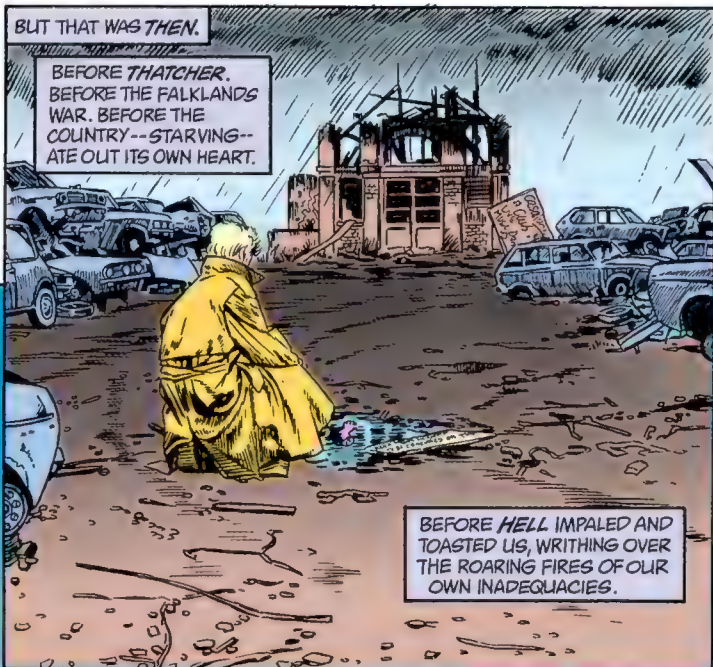
MEMORIES ARE ALL THAT'S LEFT--AND THESE COLD, RUINED BODIES LAID OUT TO ROT, WITHERING IN THE SEEPING ACID RAIN--

--GAUNT, RUSTED MEMORIALS TO THOSE POISONED HERE AND DEAD AROUND THE WORLD, NOW BURIED IN THE DECADE.



IN THOSE DAYS WE WERE YOUNG--NOT INNOCENT BUT FREE.

EXCITED, STRONG, THE WORLD WAS OURS TO SHAPE ACCORDING TO OUR WILL.



BUT THAT WAS THEN.

BEFORE *THATCHER*. BEFORE THE FALKLANDS WAR. BEFORE THE COUNTRY--STARVING--ATE OUT ITS OWN HEART.

BEFORE *HELL* IMPALED AND TOASTED US, WRITHING OVER THE ROARING FIRES OF OUR OWN INADEQUACIES.

THEN WE WERE A TEAM.

FRANK, ON HOLIDAY FROM TROUBLE IN CALIFORNIA, AND JUDITH, WHO I MET AT THE NORTH BEACH ASHRAM, STUDYING *TANTRIC YOGA*.

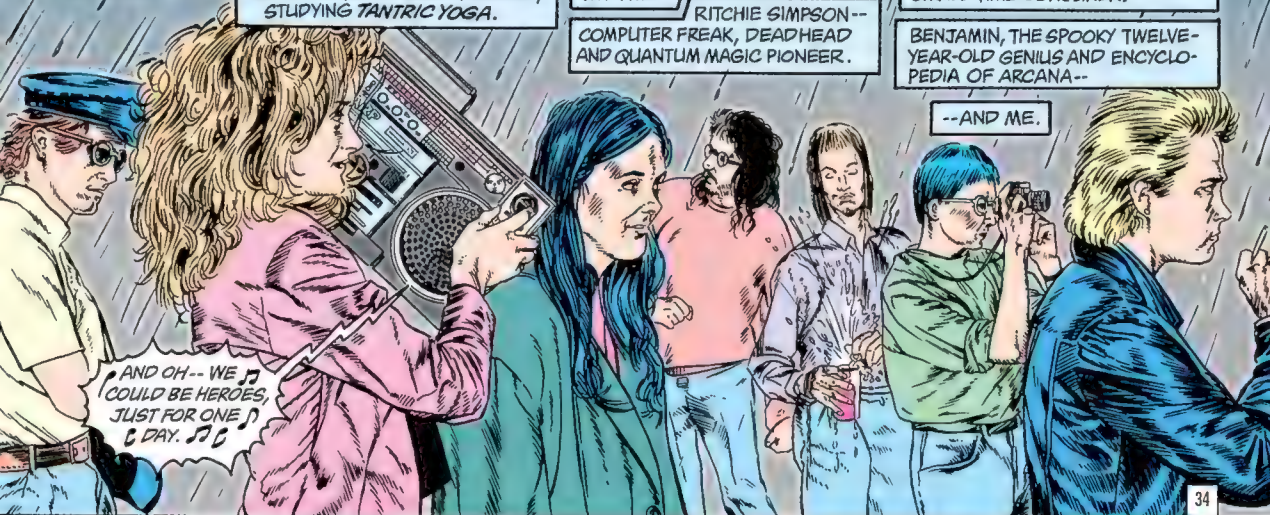
ANNE-MARIE, THE LONELY PSYCHIC; FAT, FORTY, AND SECRETLY IN LOVE WITH ME.

RITCHIE SIMPSON--COMPUTER FREAK, DEAD HEAD AND QUANTUM MAGIC PIONEER.

GARY LESTER--MUSICIAN, COUNTER-CULTURE CLONE AND SMALL-TIME CONJURER.

BENJAMIN, THE SPOOKY TWELVE-YEAR-OLD GENIUS AND ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARCANA--

--AND ME.



AND OH-- WE COULD BE HEROES, JUST FOR ONE DAY.





NEWCASTLE, EH? WHAT A CRUD PIT. REMINDS ME OF PITTSBURGH.

SO THIS IS WHERE MUCOUS MEMBRANE MADE THEIR DEBUT. NOT EXACTLY THE FILLMORE, IS IT?

AND WE AIN'T THE GRATEFUL DEAD, NEITHER. WE'RE NEW WAVE--AIN'T WE, JOHN?

SURE, GAZ, YEAH.

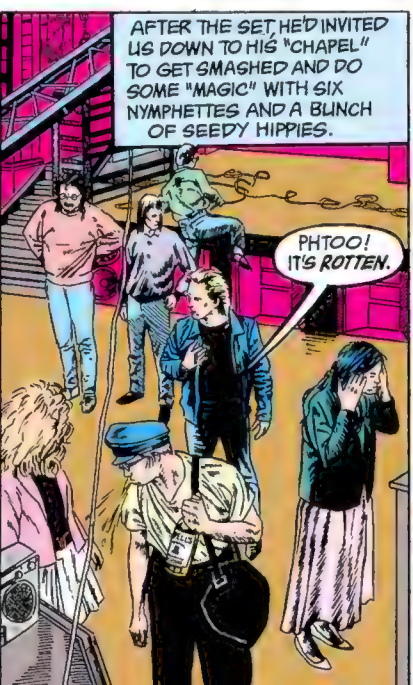
IT'S ALL LOCKED UP. BETTER KICK IT IN OR WE'LL DROWN IN THIS POXY RAIN. IF LOGUE'S IN THERE, WE'LL JUST SAY WE'VE COME FOR THE DOOR MONEY HE SCREWED US OUT OF.



EVERYONE WHO MOVED IN OCCULT CIRCLES KNEW ALEX LOGUE AS A CRAP-HEAD OF THE FIRST ORDER--A SEX AND DRUGS MAGICIAN--BUT HE HAD THIS CLUB, AND WE'D NEEDED A GIG FOR THE BAND.

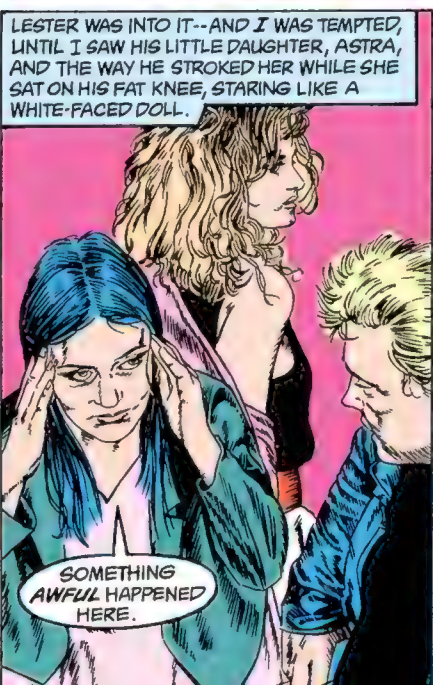
OKAY, WHO WANTS A DRINK?

K-CHANGG!



AFTER THE SET, HE'D INVITED US DOWN TO HIS "CHAPEL" TO GET SMASHED AND DO SOME "MAGIC" WITH SIX NYMPHETTES AND A BUNCH OF SEEDY HIPPIES.

PHTOO! IT'S ROTTEN.



LESTER WAS INTO IT--AND I WAS TEMPTED, UNTIL I SAW HIS LITTLE DAUGHTER, ASTRA, AND THE WAY HE STROKED HER WHILE SHE SAT ON HIS FAT KNEE, STARING LIKE A WHITE-FACED DOLL.

SOMETHING AWFUL HAPPENED HERE.



SO WHEN RAY MONDE STARTED TO GET REPORTS OF DISTURBANCES AND PHENOMENA IN NEWCASTLE, THIS SEEMED THE OBVIOUS PLACE TO LOOK.

JOHN, THERE'S A CELLAR DOOR--

I KNOW, BEN.

--AND I HEARD SOUNDS BEHIND IT.



WHEN I WAS A KID, A TRUCK USED TO GO UP OUR STREET TAKING OFFAL AND COWHEADS FROM THE ABATTOIR TO OLD BATES' BONEYARD.

RIGHT, LET'S HAVE A LOOK.

YOU COULDN'T SEE INSIDE IT, BUT IT LAID A STENCH BEHIND IT WHICH STUCK TO EVERYTHING FOR HOURS AND LINED YOUR THROAT AND LUNGS WITH THE SLIME OF PUTREFACTION.

ONCE, FROM THE TOP DECK OF A BUS, I GOT A GLIMPSE DOWN INTO THE TRUCK AND SPENT A WEEK OF NIGHTS SWEATING--

--IMAGINING HOW IT WOULD BE TO FALL INTO THAT MESS OF SPLINTERED BONE, TORN FLESH AND EYELESS SKULLS-- WALLOWING, CHOKING IN THE BLOOD AND BILE AND MAGGOTS.

THE SCENT OF CARNAGE IS UNFORGETTABLE. ACRID, RAW--A SCENT YOU CAN CHEW.

WHAT IS...?

HEEUURUCH!

STREUTH!

IN THE DARKNESS, SOMETHING MOVES. A TAIL LASHING--BREATH RASPING?

HUDDLING FORWARD FOR COMFORT, THE OTHERS PUSH ME IN. AS MY EYES ACCUSTOM TO THE LACK OF LIGHT, I COUNT AT LEAST FOUR SEPARATE HEADS BEFORE MY SENSES REEL.

# NEWCASTLE

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

I CAN'T SEE.

ROWWR NNG

NNG

NNGGNNG

EERRAII NOOO

AAAH ROFF

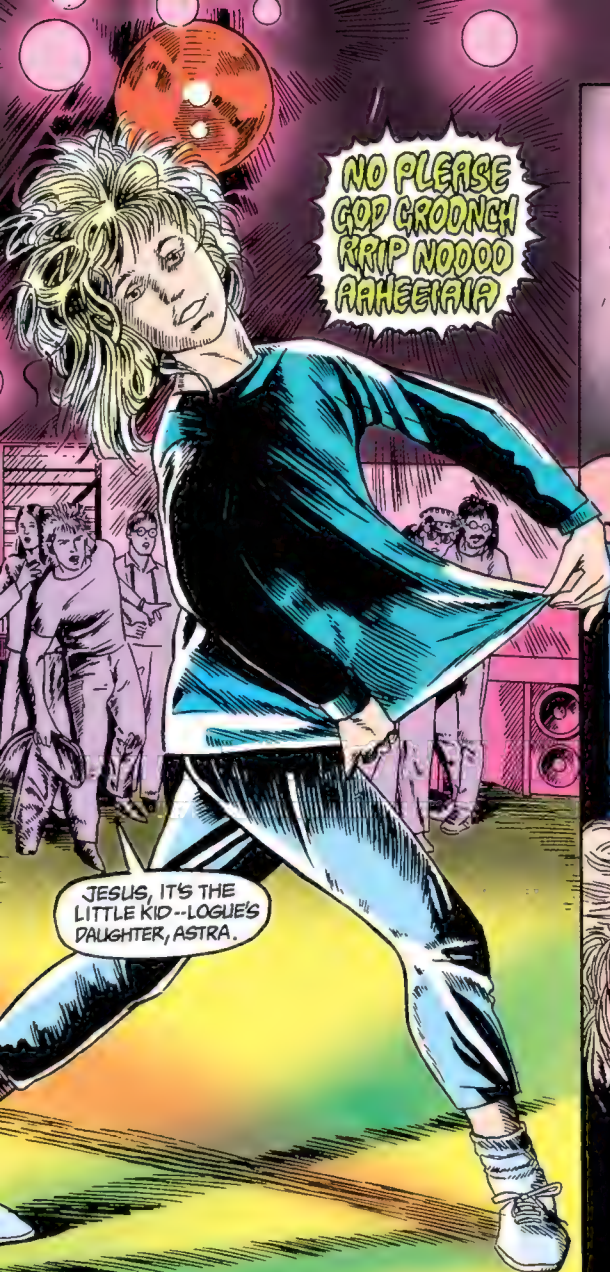
GROCH

THEN, UPSTAIRS, THE SCREAMING STARTS.

TWO CHOICES. EITHER FACE THE MAYHEM UP ABOVE-- OR STAY HERE IN THE ABATTOIR.

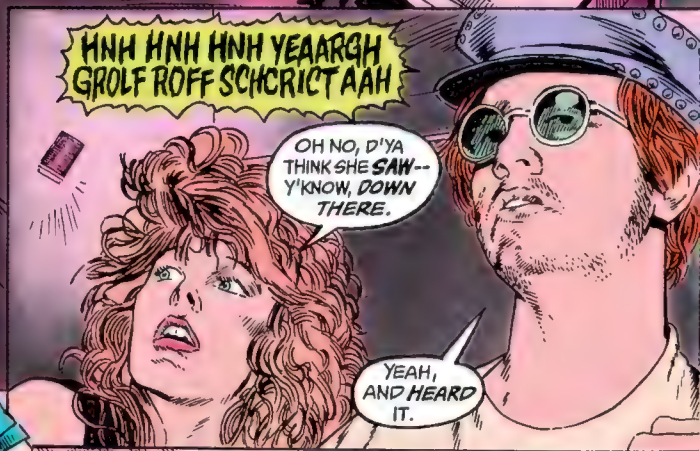
NO CONTEST.





NO PLEASE  
GOD GROONCH  
RRIP NOOOO  
AAHEEKIAIA

JESUS, IT'S THE  
LITTLE KID--LOGUE'S  
DAUGHTER, ASTRA.



HNN HNN HNN YEAARGH  
GROFF ROFF SCHCRICHT AAH

OH NO, D'YA  
THINK SHE SAW--  
Y'KNOW, DOWN  
THERE.

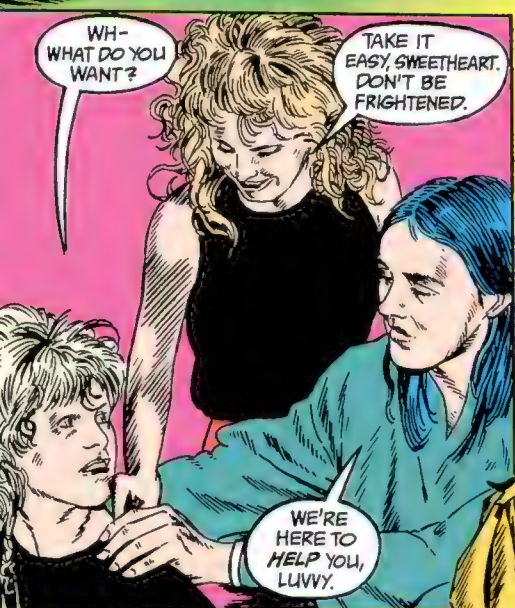
YEAH,  
AND HEARD  
IT.



SKROMMP YEURGH  
GROMCH GARRA BING

RITCHIE,  
KILL THAT BLOODY  
ROW, WILL YOU?

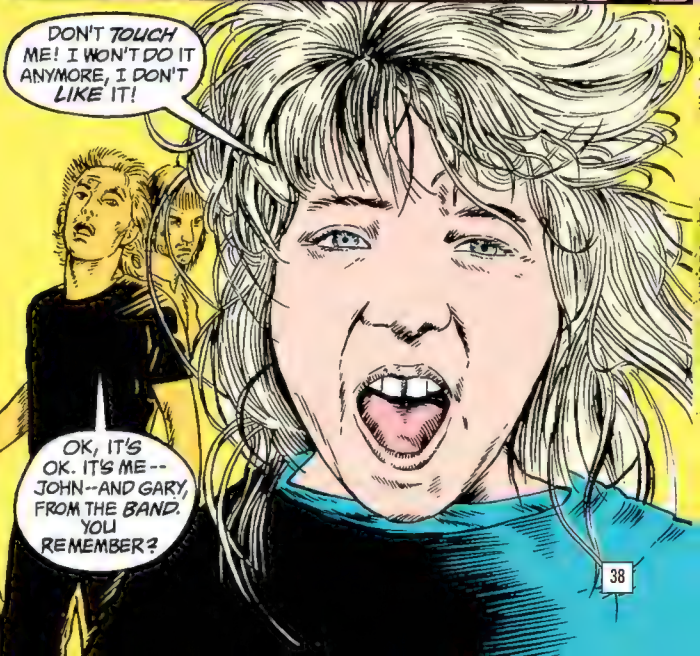
HELLO.



WH-  
WHAT DO YOU  
WANT?

TAKE IT  
EASY, SWEETHEART.  
DON'T BE  
FRIGHTENED.

WE'RE  
HERE TO  
HELP YOU,  
LUVVY.



DON'T TOUCH  
ME! I WON'T DO IT  
ANYMORE, I DON'T  
LIKE IT!

OK, IT'S  
OK. IT'S ME--  
JOHN--AND GARY,  
FROM THE BAND.  
YOU  
REMEMBER?





WHAT HAPPENED, ASTRA?  
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR  
DAD?

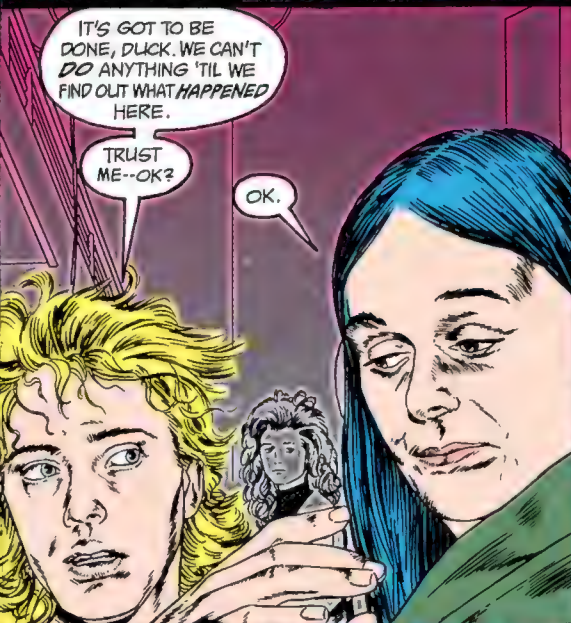
HEEHEEHEEHEE. DIDN'T  
YOU HEAR IT? NORFULTHING  
GOT HIM, NORFULTHING  
NORFULTHING, NORFULTHING...

BEN, GO AND BOLT  
THAT CELLAR DOOR.



SETTLE HER DOWN  
AS BEST YOU CAN, ANNE-  
MARIE. I'M GOING TO TRY  
AND HYPNOTIZE HER.

I DON'T KNOW  
IF YOU SHOULD, JOHN.  
SHE'S SO DISTURBED.  
HER MIND'S LIKE ...LIKE A  
PACK OF HUNTING  
DOGS.



IT'S GOT TO BE  
DONE, DUCK. WE CAN'T  
DO ANYTHING 'TIL WE  
FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED  
HERE.

TRUST  
ME--OK?

OK.



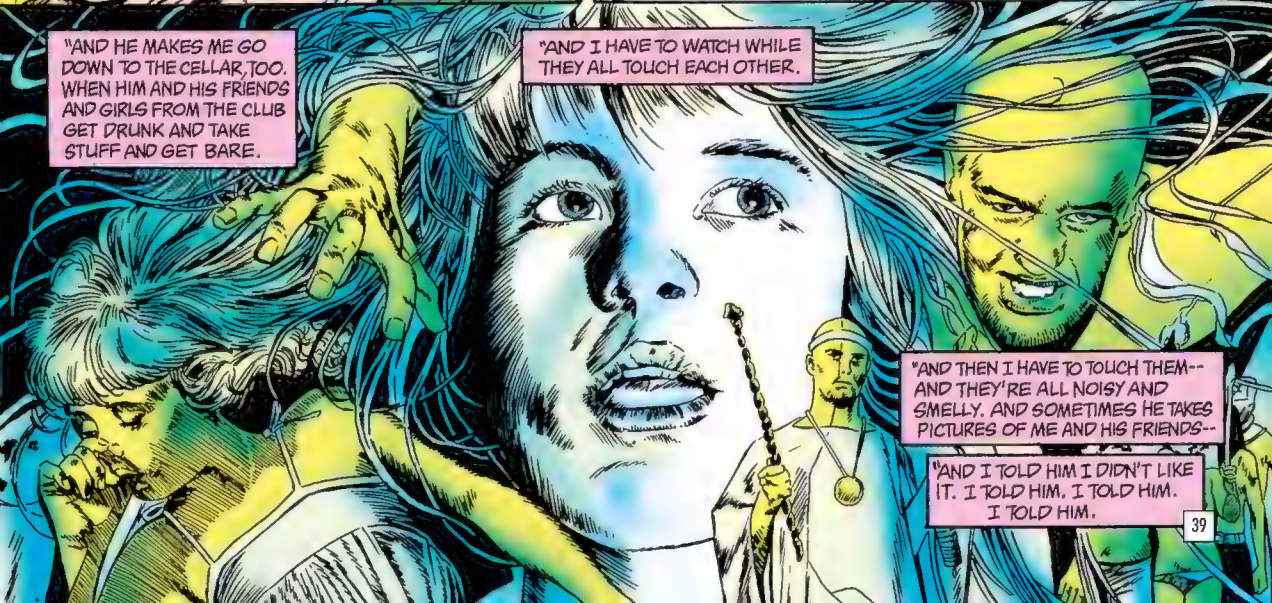
NOW ASTRA,  
LLIV--I WANT YOU TO  
FEEL ALL WARM AND  
COZY, LIKE YOU WERE  
SNUGGLED UP IN  
BED.

TOKE,  
FRANK?

THANKS,  
MAN.

I DON'T LIKE IT IN MY BED 'CAUSE MY  
DAD ALWAYS GETS IN WITH ME--AND HE'S  
ALL FAT AND HAIRY.

HE MAKES ME DO THINGS, LIKE  
MY MUMMY USED TO DO BEFORE  
SHE HAD THE ACCIDENT.



"AND HE MAKES ME GO  
DOWN TO THE CELLAR, TOO.  
WHEN HIM AND HIS FRIENDS  
AND GIRLS FROM THE CLUB  
GET DRUNK AND TAKE  
STUFF AND GET BARE.

"AND I HAVE TO WATCH WHILE  
THEY ALL TOUCH EACH OTHER.

"AND THEN I HAVE TO TOUCH THEM--  
AND THEY'RE ALL NOISY AND  
SMELLY. AND SOMETIMES HE TAKES  
PICTURES OF ME AND HIS FRIENDS--

"AND I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T LIKE  
IT. I TOLD HIM. I TOLD HIM.  
I TOLD HIM.



"HE SHOULD HAVE LISTENED.  
IT WASN'T MY FAULT.

"ONE OF THEM HAS TOO MUCH  
OF THE STUFF AND HURTS  
ONE OF THE GIRLS-- THEN HE'S  
HURTING ME.

"I GET SCARED AND ANGRY.  
NO ONE WILL HELP.

"SO I THINK AND THINK. I THINK OF  
THE VERY WORST THING THAT ANYONE  
COULD THINK OF.

"AND IT COMES--  
IT COMES TO  
HELP ME.

"IT'S A NORFULTHING. PARTLY IT'S A GIANT DOG AND  
PARTLY IT'S A MONKEY WITH A PURPLE BUM, LIKE AT  
THE ZOO. BUT WORSE THAN THAT, IT'S ALL INSIDEY-OUT.

"IT'S STICKY AND IT'S GOT HEARTS AND BITS ALL  
DANGLING OFF IT--AND A HUGE HORRIBLE THING,  
LIKE A MAN'S.

"IT GETS THEM AND  
DOES IT TO THEM,  
REALLY FAST--AND  
THIS TIME THEY DON'T  
LIKE IT AT ALL."

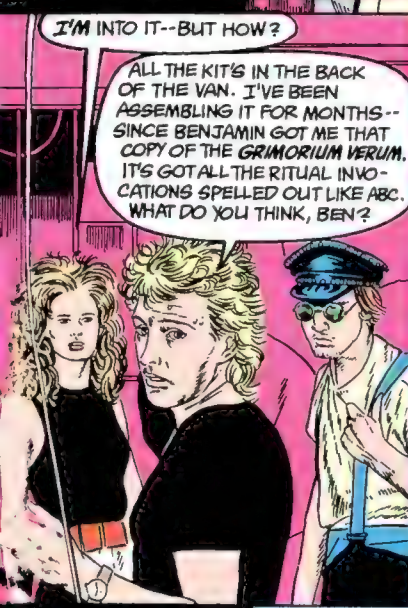
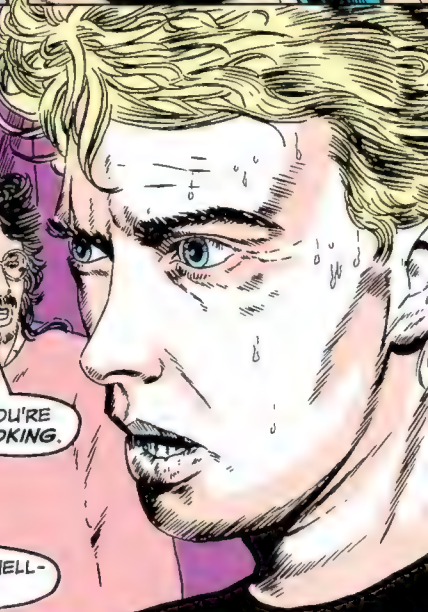
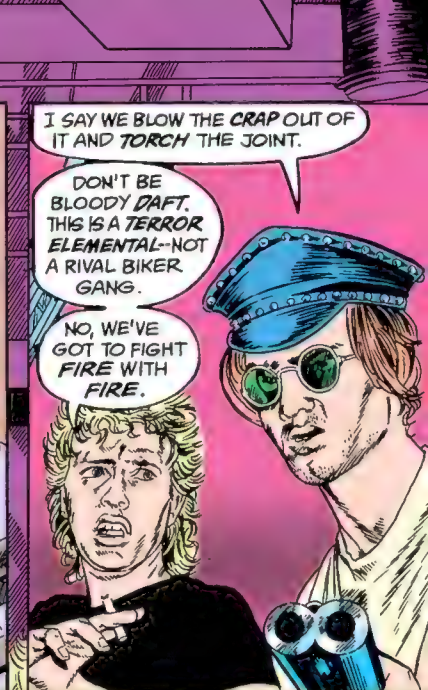
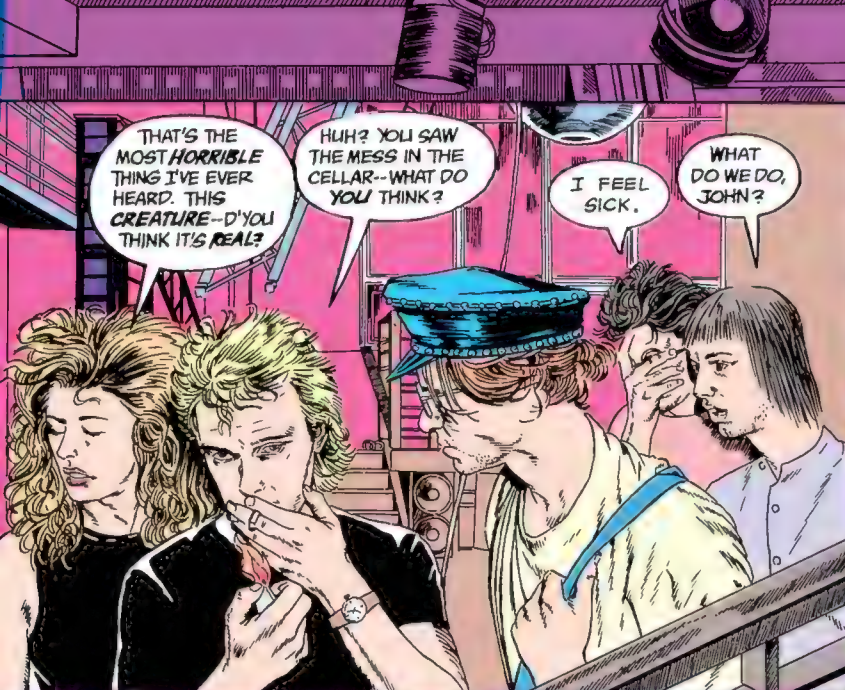
THEY'RE SCREAMING AND SCREAMING  
BUT IT DOESN'T MIND. IT JUST EATS THEM  
ALL--CHEWS THEM UP INTO SLOPPY BITS.

YOU CAN SEE THEIR BONES AND  
THE JELLY INSIDE --AND AND...

SLEEP NOW, GIRL, AND FORGET.  
WHEN YOU WAKE UP THE NORFULTHING  
WILL BE GONE -- I PROMISE.

BLEEDIN'  
NORA!









JOHNHELPMEEEE  
LINGLINGH LINGH!

BEN,  
BEN!

JEEZ,  
LOOKATIT!

WHAT'S IT  
DOING TO HIM?  
OH GOD, NO!

GET OUTTA  
THE FREAKIN'  
WAY!

GROMPH  
SCHKROMPH

GRROOOW  
OWWW!

KBAMM!

PLEASE,  
NOOOOO!

KBAMM!

C'MON, LESTER--MOVE IT.

FOR CHRISAKES!  
GET OUT, GET  
OUT, GET  
OUT!

THERE IT  
GOES.





JESUS, BEN, WHAT WERE YOU DOING DOWN THERE?

JUH JUH JUH  
JUST TUH TUH TUH TUH  
TUH RYING TUH TO TUH  
TUH TAKE I-I-ITS PUH  
PUH PUH PUH PUH  
PICTURE.



RIGHT. THAT SETTLES IT. I'M GOING TO DO IT. WHO'S WITH ME?

NOT ME, MAN. I MET ALL MY DEMONS AT KHE SANH.

I COULD LOOK AFTER THE CHILD.

I'M IN.

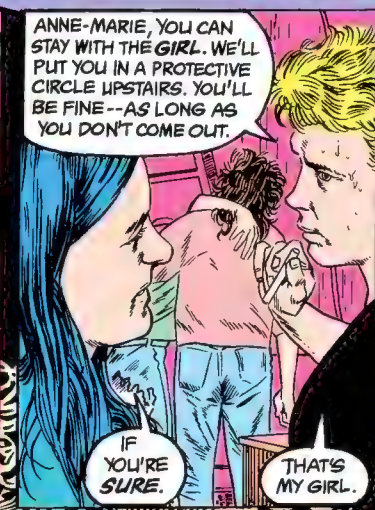
ME TOO.

I CAN'T.



OK, FAIR ENOUGH. RITCHIE, YOU TAKE BENJAMIN OUT TO THE VAN AND SORT HIM OUT--GIVE 'IM A VODKA, OR SOMETHING.

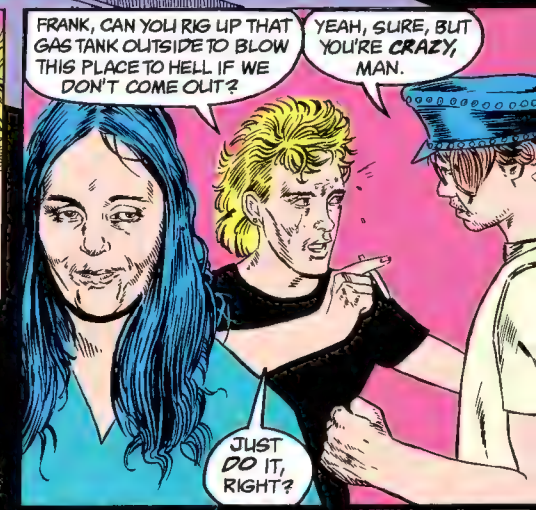
RIGHT.



ANNE-MARIE, YOU CAN STAY WITH THE GIRL. WE'LL PUT YOU IN A PROTECTIVE CIRCLE UPSTAIRS. YOU'LL BE FINE--AS LONG AS YOU DON'T COME OUT.

IF YOU'RE SURE.

THAT'S MY GIRL.



FRANK, CAN YOU RIG UP THAT GAS TANK OUTSIDE TO BLOW THIS PLACE TO HELL IF WE DON'T COME OUT?

YEAH, SURE, BUT YOU'RE CRAZY, MAN.

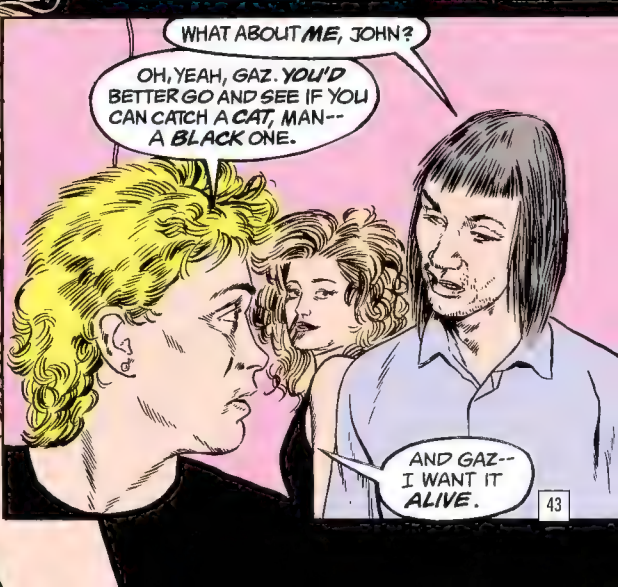
JUST DO IT, RIGHT?



AND JUDITH. YOU COME WITH ME, DARLIN'. WE'VE GOT TO PREPARE OURSELVES.

YOU MEAN LIKE TANTRICALLY, I SUPPOSE?

HHMMMM.

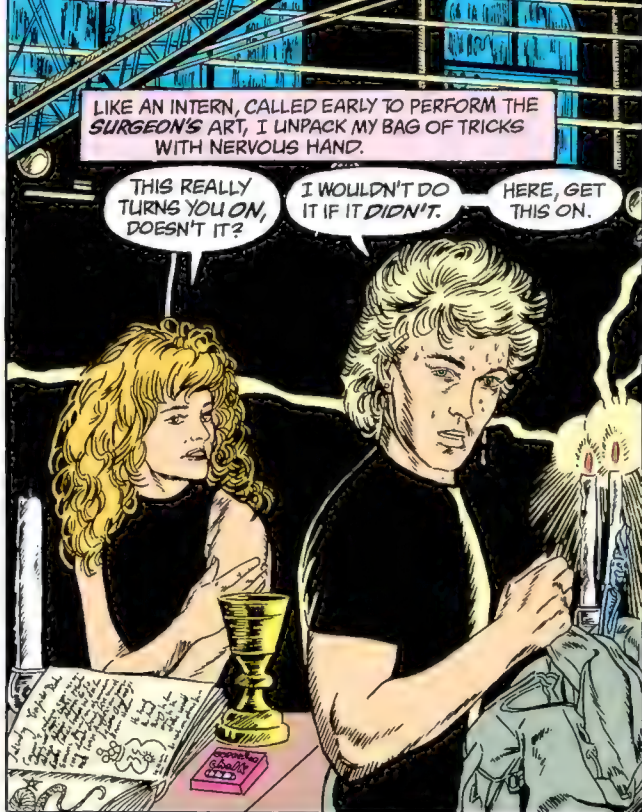


WHAT ABOUT ME, JOHN?

OH, YEAH, GAZ. YOU'D BETTER GO AND SEE IF YOU CAN CATCH A CAT, MAN--A BLACK ONE.

AND GAZ-- I WANT IT ALIVE.



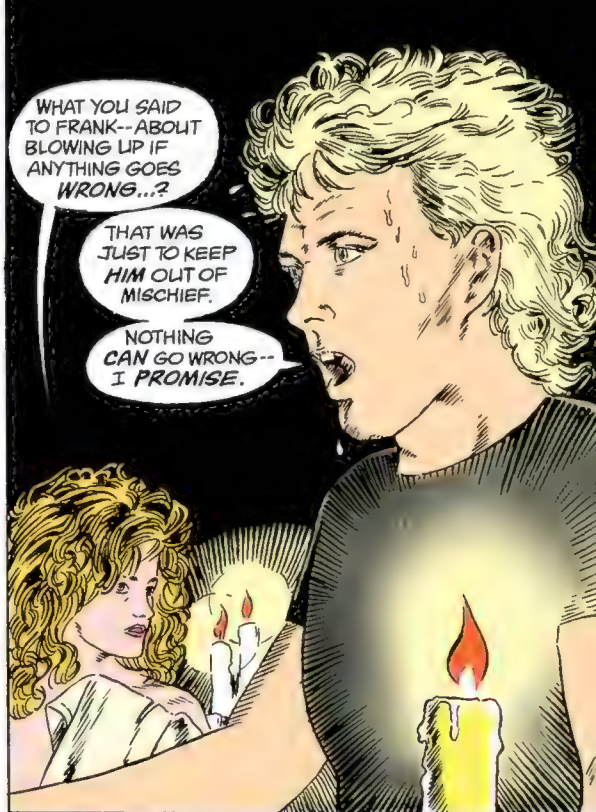


LIKE AN INTERN, CALLED EARLY TO PERFORM THE SURGEON'S ART, I UNPACK MY BAG OF TRICKS WITH NERVOUS HAND.

THIS REALLY TURNS YOU ON, DOESN'T IT?

I WOULDN'T DO IT IF IT DIDN'T.

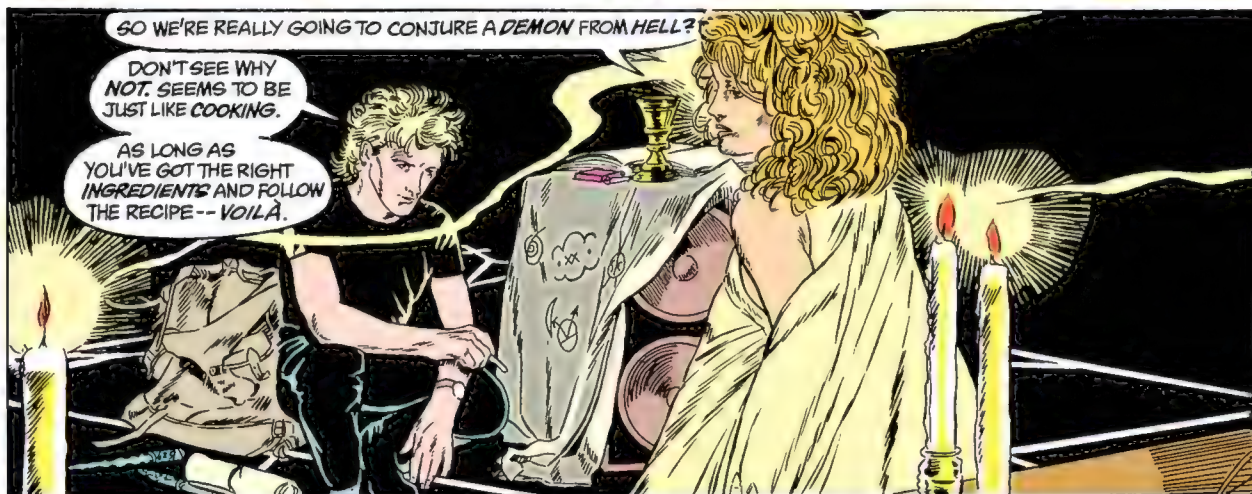
HERE, GET THIS ON.



WHAT YOU SAID TO FRANK-- ABOUT BLOWING UP IF ANYTHING GOES WRONG...?

THAT WAS JUST TO KEEP HIM OUT OF MISCHIEF.

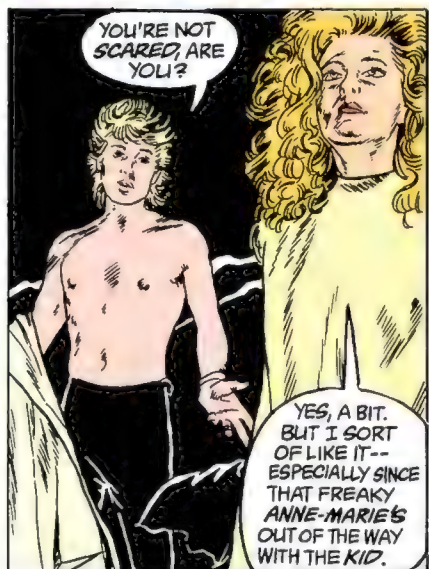
NOTHING CAN GO WRONG-- I PROMISE.



SO WE'RE REALLY GOING TO CONJURE A DEMON FROM HELL?

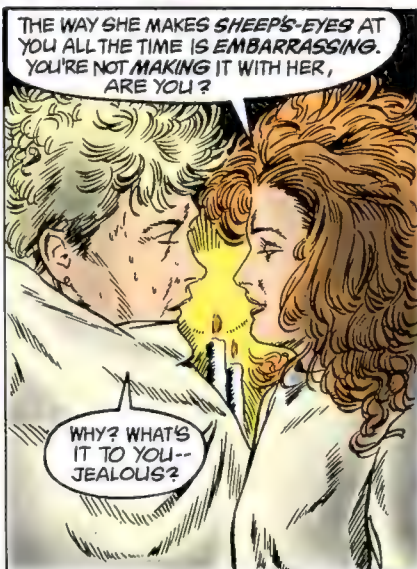
DON'T SEE WHY NOT. SEEMS TO BE JUST LIKE COOKING.

AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS AND FOLLOW THE RECIPE-- VOILA.



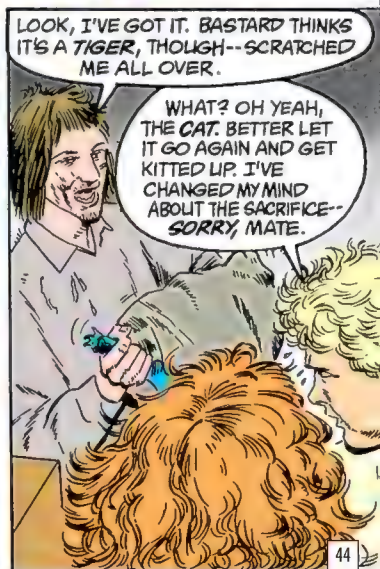
YOU'RE NOT SCARED, ARE YOU?

YES, A BIT. BUT I SORT OF LIKE IT-- ESPECIALLY SINCE THAT FREAKY ANNE-MARIE'S OUT OF THE WAY WITH THE KID.



THE WAY SHE MAKES SHEEPS-EYES AT YOU ALL THE TIME IS EMBARRASSING. YOU'RE NOT MAKING IT WITH HER, ARE YOU?

WHY? WHAT'S IT TO YOU-- JEALOUS?



LOOK, I'VE GOT IT. BASTARD THINKS IT'S A TIGER, THOUGH-- SCRATCHED ME ALL OVER.

WHAT? OH YEAH, THE CAT. BETTER LET IT GO AGAIN AND GET KITTLED UP. I'VE CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT THE SACRIFICE-- SORRY, MATE.



THE SMOKE OF AROMATICS TRANSCENDS THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN EARTH AND THE REALMS BEYOND.

HE ENHANCES HIS WILL WITH THE MACHINERY OF RITUAL--TURNING WITH THE VERY WHEELS AND COGS OF THE UNIVERSAL ENGINE.

THIS IS THE KNIFE OF THE ART--FORGED FROM NEW STEEL ON THE DAY OF JUPITER.

THE MAGUS DOES THE ARMOR OF THE WORD.

THIS IS THE ROD OF THE ART--HAZELWOOD, CUT AT THE HOUR OF MERCURY.

THIS IS THE PARCHMENT--PLAYED FROM A VIRGIN KID.

HE PAYS THE PIPER, CALLS THE TUNE--CONDUCTING AN ORCHESTRA OF POWER FROM A SCORE, WRIT WITH THE JUICE OF LIFE.

HELOH~TAUL~VARF~FEON~  
HOMOPORIUM~CLEMIACH~  
SERUCLEACH~AGLA~  
DECRAMMATHON~CASOLY~  
OSURMY~DERMUSAN ...

BY THIS TALISMAN AND THIS NAMING CHARACTER, INSCRIBED IN BLOOD WITH THE PEN OF THE ART--

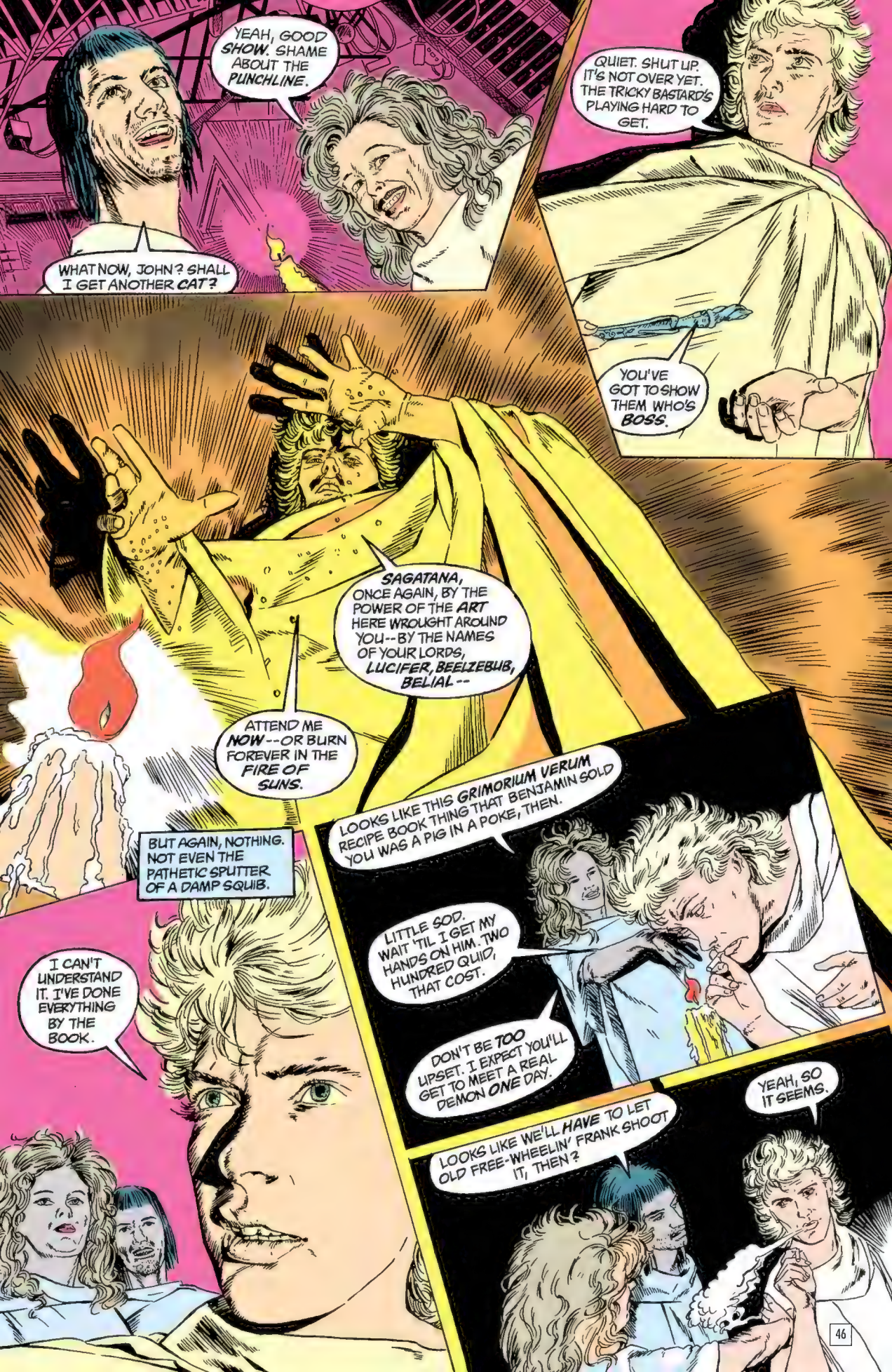
--I WAKE YOU SAGATANA.

ATALSLOYM~ASOPHIEL~ILHOSTEON  
~BANIEL~IFALVA~OMOR~FRANGRAM  
~ORAGIN~VENICE, SAGATANA.  
I CONJURE THEE, APPEAR--IN  
HUMAN FORM, FAIR AND AGREEABLE,  
WITHOUT NOISE OR INCONVENIENCE--  
IN ORDER TO OBEY MY WILL.

WE WAIT--BUT NOTHING BLOODY HAPPENS.

C'MON, YOU BASTARD, WHERE ARE YOU?





YEAH, GOOD SHOW. SHAME ABOUT THE PUNCHLINE.

WHAT NOW, JOHN? SHALL I GET ANOTHER CAT?

QUIET. SHUT UP. IT'S NOT OVER YET. THE TRICKY BASTARD'S PLAYING HARD TO GET.

YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW THEM WHO'S BOSS.

SAGATANA, ONCE AGAIN, BY THE POWER OF THE ART HERE WROUGHT AROUND YOU--BY THE NAMES OF YOUR LORDS, LUCIFER, BEELZEBUB, BELIAL--

ATTEND ME NOW--OR BURN FOREVER IN THE FIRE OF SUNS.

BUT AGAIN, NOTHING. NOT EVEN THE PATHETIC SPUTTER OF A DAMP SQUIB.

LOOKS LIKE THIS GRIMORIUM VERUM RECIPE BOOK THING THAT BENJAMIN SOLD YOU WAS A PIG IN A POKE, THEN.

LITTLE SOD. WAIT 'TIL I GET MY HANDS ON HIM. TWO HUNDRED QUID, THAT COST.

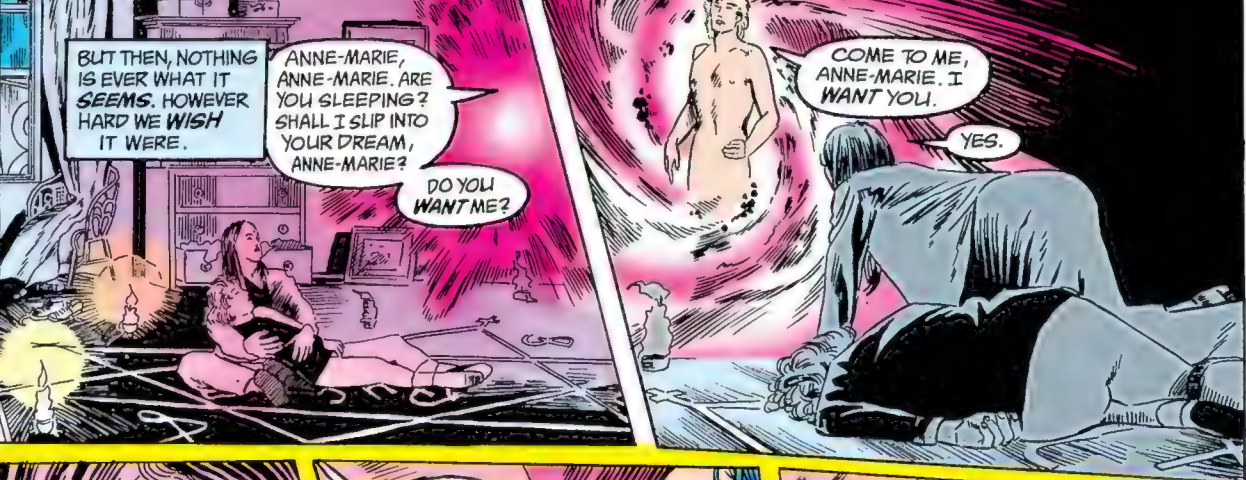
DON'T BE TOO UPSET. I EXPECT YOU'LL GET TO MEET A REAL DEMON ONE DAY.

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO LET OLD FREE-WHEELIN' FRANK SHOOT IT, THEN?

YEAH, SO IT SEEMS.

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. I'VE DONE EVERYTHING BY THE BOOK.





BUT THEN, NOTHING IS EVER WHAT IT **SEEMS**. HOWEVER HARD WE **WISH** IT WERE.

ANNE-MARIE, ANNE-MARIE. ARE YOU SLEEPING? SHALL I SLIP INTO YOUR DREAM, ANNE-MARIE?

DO YOU WANT ME?

COME TO ME, ANNE-MARIE. I WANT YOU.

YES.



KISS ME, ANNE-MARIE.

YES.

FOLD ME TIGHT IN YOUR WARM FLESH, ANNE-MARIE. EMBRACE ME.

OH YES, JOHN. YES.



NOW FEEL ME, ANNE-MARIE.

UGHHH!



HAH, WOMAN, YOU ARE **SPOILED**. RUN NOW--



NOOOOOOO!

RUN-- GET THEE TO A NUNNERY.







SAGATANA, BY THE POWER OF THIS BLASTING WAND--FOR THE FINAL TIME OF ASKING--ATTEND UPON ME, YOUR MASTER.

JOHN, LOOK. WHAT'S...?

ASTRA! CHRIST, WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE? GET OUT--QUICKLY.

BUT YOU CALLED ME. I HEARD YOU CALL ME.

NO, I WASN'T CALLING YOU. PLEASE GO BACK. IT'S NOT SAFE HERE YET.

WHAT--?

HULLO, NORFULTING.

ANNE-MARIE JUMPED OUT THE WINDOW.

WHERE THE HELL'S ANNE-MARIE?

GRRRRRR  
ROWRRRRRR

GNNUKSH

ROWWRUMPHH  
GRROLEFF

GOWRRR GROPHH

GRROWNCH

STOP. NOBODY BREAKS THE CIRCLE. WHATEVER HAPPENS.

OH GOD.

BUT...

NO, ASTRA. DON'T WAKE HIM UP.

I'LL GO AND GRAB THE SILLY LITTLE...

SSKKRAUNCHHH  
SKKITCHH

OH, PLEASE, DON'T. I CAN'T WATCH. IT'S GOING TO EAT HER.

YEAH, AND THE REST.







THERE IS A FEAR WHICH THRUSTS, LIKE SPLINTERED WOOD, INTO THE CENTER OF YOUR BEING.

IT IS THE FEAR WHICH COMES WITH REALIZATION THAT YOU ARE UTTERLY HELPLESS--

HERE, BOY.

C'MON.

--POWERLESS AND FRAGILE, TRAPPED BETWEEN THE BLOODY JAWS OF UNREASON.

COME TO MUMMY.

THAT FEAR STRIKES NOW-- STARTING A SLOW, CHURNING EARTHQUAKE IN MY BOWEL.

SPREADING--

--ERUPTING--

--TURNING THE WHOLE WORLD, SCREAMING, ON ITS HEAD



THE RITUAL DID WORK. THE DEMON CAME-- BUT NOT DIRECTLY.

SAGATANA, DUKE OF DARKNESS AND DESPAIR-- I COMMAND YOU, UNDER HEAVEN'S FIRE--

--LEAVE THE GIRL UNHARMED AND SUBMIT TO MY INSTRUCTION.

I HAVE OBEYED YOU ALL I CHOOSE. DID I NOT COME--ALTHOUGH YOU COULD NOT MAKE ME?

DID I NOT ASSUME A "HUMAN FORM, FAIR AND AGREEABLE, WITHOUT NOISE OR INCONVENIENCE?"

--ALTHOUGH I OWED YOUR IMPOTENT, ANTIQUE MAGIC NO ALLEGIANCE WHATSOEVER.

DID I NOT DISPATCH THIS MAD, CORRUPT DEFORMITY--

LEAVE HER NOW!

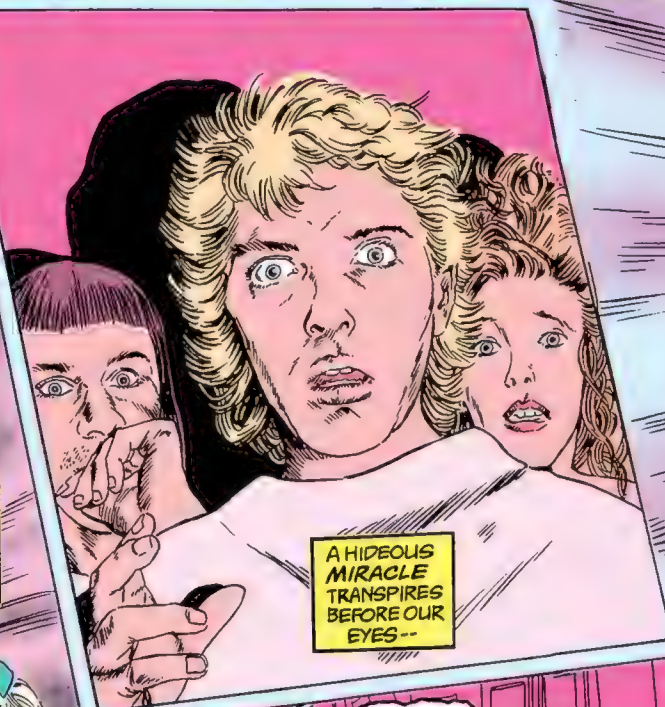
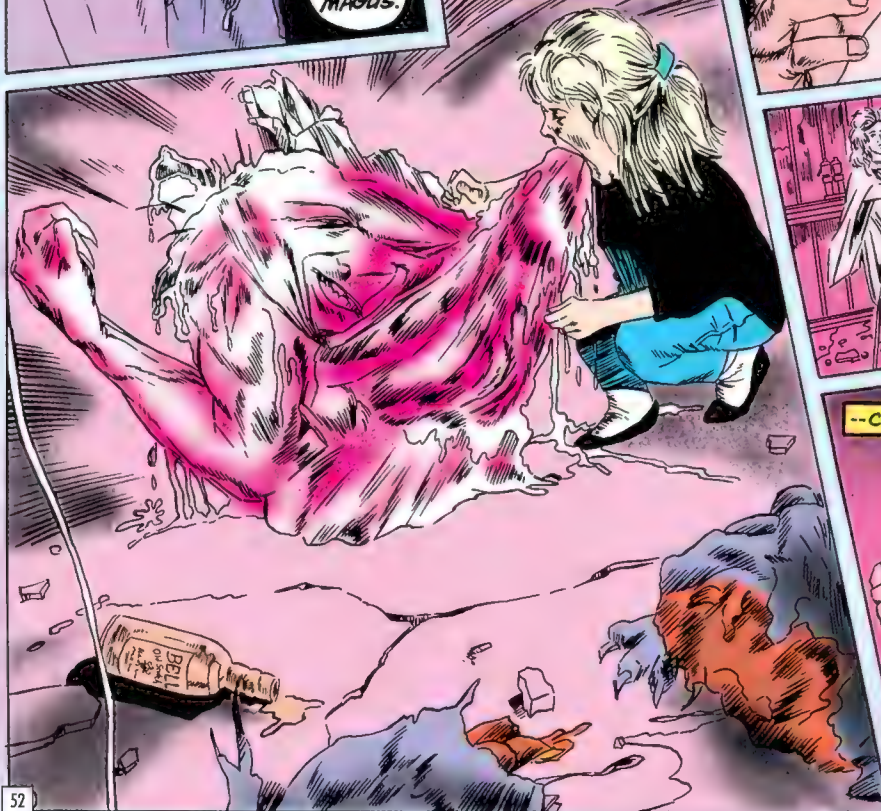
JESUS, IT'S IN THE GIRL.

I, SUBMIT TO YOU? HAH!



AS YOU WISH, SO BE IT--MAGUS.

THE FIBERS OF SANITY'S ROPE-- STRETCHED TO EXTREMITY--FRAY AND UNRAVEL.

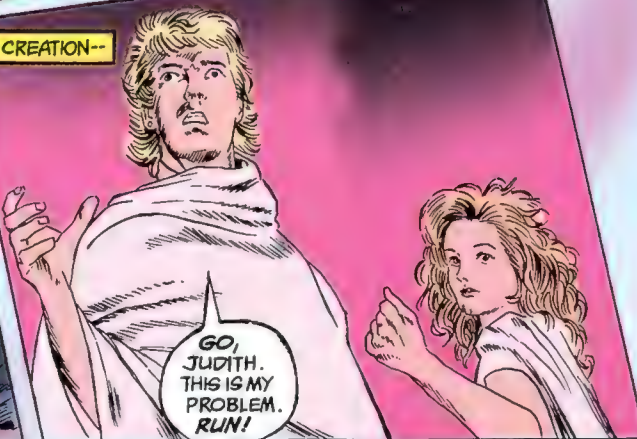


A HIDEOUS MIRACLE TRANSPIRES BEFORE OUR EYES--



OWWWW  
OOOWWWW  
OOOWWWW

--CREATION--



GO, JUDITH. THIS IS MY PROBLEM. RUN!



YOU ARE PATHETIC, CONSTANTINE. WALLOWING IN IGNORANCE, YOU SEEK TO CONSTRAIN ME?

KNOW YOU NOT THE ROOT OF ALL POWER IS IN NAMING--AND YOU HAVE NO CONCEPTION OF WHO I AM.

--THE GHASTLY, BLOODY, BIRTH OF NIGHTMARE.









BUT...?

THE CHARACTER YOU DESCRIBED WAS MINE -- BUT SAGATANA'S NOT THE NAME THAT FITS. AND THUS YOUR INVOCATION LACKED THE WEIGHT OF MAGICAL IMPERATIVE.



SO WHY DID YOU COME, CHUM?

BECAUSE IT GREATLY PLEASURES ME, TO CHASTEN ARROGANCE AND CORRODE THE BRASS OF VANITY.

IT'S WITH THE WITLESS OF YOUR SORT THAT HELL ENJOYS ITS FINEST SPORT.



AND NOW--SINCE I HAVE FREELY PRANCED AND DANCED ACCORDING TO YOUR FUTILE ART--JUSTICE DECREES THAT I SHOULD CLAIM MY FEE.

I'LL TAKE THIS CHILD OF TORTURED HEART, TO EASE ME THROUGH ETERNITY.

NO! I SCREWED IT UP. TAKE ME IF YOU MUST.

YOU? NO, YOU ARE MINE ALREADY-- AND YOUR FRIENDS. FRESH BLOOMS TO BE ANTICIPATED, PLUCKED ACCORDING TO MY WHIM.

I WANT HER NOW. THERE IS NO NEGOTIATION--ALTHOUGH AS A SPECIAL DISPENSATION--IF YOU INSIST, I GIVE YOU LEAVE, ACCOMPANY HER BELOW.

"STEP FORWARD, HERO-- IF YOU WOULD CONQUER FEAR--AND FULLY COMPREHEND THE MEANING OF THE WORDS, ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE."



WRAPPED FIRMLY IN MY OWN, HER HAND IS STILL AND COLD--A REPTILE TREMBLING IN THE DARK.

I LEAD HER, UNPROTESTING, THROUGH THE GATES OF HELL.

DO IT, FRANK.

ARE YOU SURE...?

JUST DO IT. HE'S NOT COMING OUT.

BUT I CAN'T DO IT. NOBODY COULD. NO ONE COULD WALK WILLINGLY INTO THIS PLACE.

I HAVE TO TRY THE BLASTING WAND. WHAT'S LEFT TO LOSE?

BY THE POWER OF ADONAY--THE ONE WHO RULES ALL. WITH THIS CONSECRATED ROD OF THE ART--

DEMON, I BLAST YOU TO OBLIVIO...

AHH!

OK, GET BACK BEHIND THE VAN.

SORRY, JOHN.

NOTHING TO DO WITH ME, BUT THE UNIVERSE NOW BUCKS AND QUAKES AROUND US.

C'MON, GIRL--  
RUN.

I GRIP HER TIGHT, DRAGGING HER THROUGH A BLINDNESS OF FIRE AND SMOKE.

GOD, LET THERE BE LIGHT.

AND THERE IS LIGHT. AND I MAKE IT. I LEAD THE INNOCENT FROM HELL INTO SALVATION.

LOOK, SOMEONE'S COMING OUT.

THEY SHOULD MAKE ME A BLOODY SAINT FOR THIS.

OH GOD, NO. HER ARM--ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HER ARM...

BETTER GIVE IT TO ME, JOHN.

IT'S JOHN.

C'MON MAN, LET GO. IT'S ALL OVER.

NO, LEAVE HER. YOU CAN'T PART US NOW. WE'VE BEEN TO HELL AND BACK.

DO YOU THINK SO, MAN. I THINK YOU'RE PROBABLY STILL THERE.

WEEP NOW CHILDREN. RANT AND TEAR YOUR HAIR. REMEMBER, HELL IS YOUR EVENTUAL HOME--CONSIDER THIS A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME.

NOOOOOOOO!



CATASTROPHE, FROM START TO  
FINISH. INEXCUSABLE, STUPID,  
BLOODY SHAMEFUL CATASTROPHE.

NO ONE TO BLAME. I HOLD THE  
SMOKING GUN--THE ACCUSATORY  
FINGERS POINT *MY* WAY.



STILL, WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES--  
DON'T WE? EVEN *DEMONS*. THE  
ONLY DIFFERENCE IS, I'VE  
PAID FOR MINE.

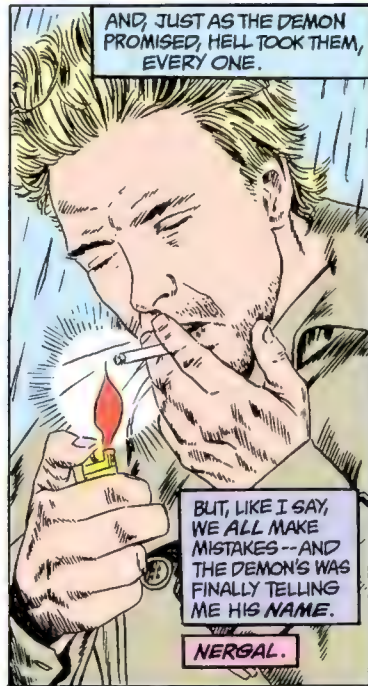
TWO YEARS IN RAVENSCAR  
SECURE FACILITY FOR THE  
DANGEROUSLY DERANGED.



WE ALL PAID.

ANNE-MARIE TOOK HOLY ORDERS.  
BENJAMIN GOT HIS STUTTER.  
LESTER GOT HIS JUNK HABIT.

RITCHIE WENT INTO COMPUTERS.  
JUDITH WENT TO WORK WITH ABUSED  
CHILDREN AND FRANK WENT OFF  
BIKING AROUND THE WORLD.



AND, JUST AS THE DEMON  
PROMISED, HELL TOOK THEM,  
EVERY ONE.

BUT, LIKE I SAY,  
WE *ALL* MAKE  
MISTAKES--AND  
THE DEMON'S WAS  
FINALLY TELLING  
ME HIS NAME.

**NERGAL.**

**NERGAL.**

THIS IS WHERE WE  
STARTED IT AND THIS  
IS WHERE IT'LL *FINISH*.

THIS IS THE KILLING-  
GROUND WHERE I  
TAKE MY *REVENGE*--  
JUST AS SOON AS I  
WORK OUT EXACTLY  
*HOW*.



IT'S A FUNNY THING. I'VE ONLY  
JUST REALIZED THAT *CASANOVA*  
MEANS *NEWCASTLE*. PERHAPS  
THAT'S WHAT THE FORTUNE-TELLER  
ON CLACTON PIER MEANT WHEN  
SHE SAID "PHILANDERING"  
WOULD BE MY DOWNFALL.

OH WELL--  
WE'LL SEE.

*End*



# HELLBLAZER









THE DEMON NERGAH IS IN VILE HUMOR-- HIS SUBTLE MACHINERIES OF DECEIT STOKED BY A BASE CONJURER'S SLEIGHT OF HAND.

HELL'S HONOR IS IMPLIGNED. FACE MUST BE SAVED-- THE RASH OF HUMILIATION SALVED WITH THE OINTMENT OF REVENGE, OR HE MUST ANSWER FOR HIS ERROR.

"WHERE ARE YOU HIDING, CONSTANTINE?"



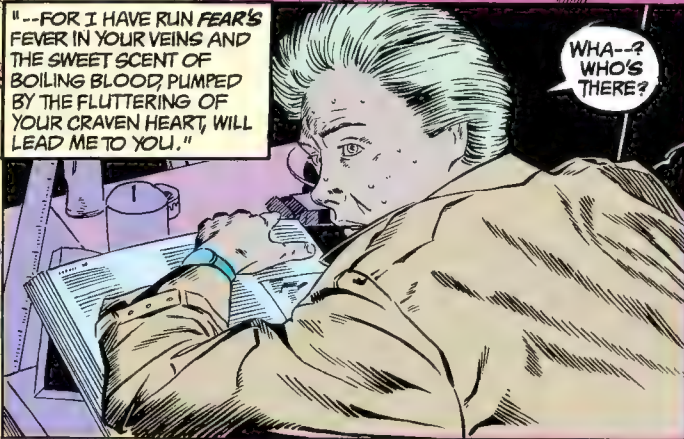
"IN WHAT NEST OF ORDURE DO YOU COWER-- GRUBBING AMONGST DUNG-BEETLES?"

"IN WHICH SWAMP DO YOU HUDDLE, SHIVERING IN THE DARK SHADOW OF YOUR ELEMENTAL LORD?"

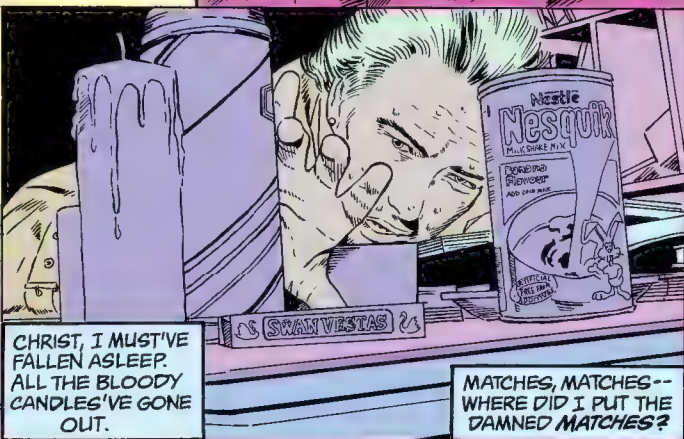


"TAKE NO COMFORT, NO SANCTUARY--"

"--FOR I HAVE RUN FEAR'S FEVER IN YOUR VEINS AND THE SWEET SCENT OF BOILING BLOOD PUMPED BY THE FLUTTERING OF YOUR CRAVEN HEART, WILL LEAD ME TO YOU."



WHA--? WHO'S THERE?

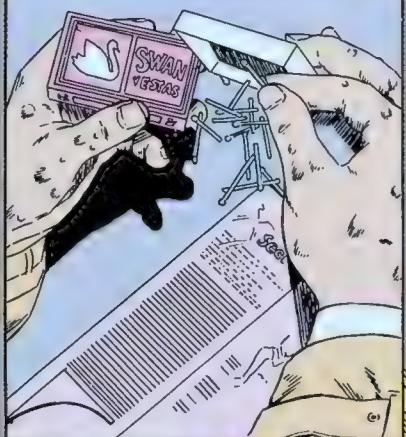


CHRIST, I MUST'VE FALLEN ASLEEP. ALL THE BLOODY CANDLES'VE GONE OUT.

MATCHES, MATCHES-- WHERE DID I PUT THE DAMNED MATCHES?



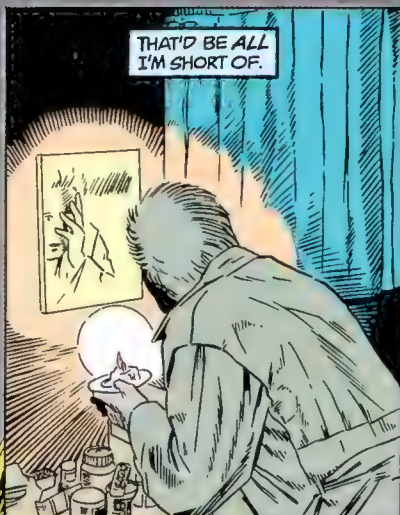
STRENGTH, I'VE GOT THE SHAKES  
BAD TODAY--AND I FEEL ATROCIOUS.



HOPE I'M NOT COMING DOWN WITH  
THE BLOODY SHANGHAI FLU.



THAT'D BE ALL  
I'M SHORT OF.



AAAHH!

JESUS  
CHRIST, WHAT'S  
HAPPENING? MY  
GODDAMN FACE  
IS FALLING OFF?



“the DEVIL  
YOU KNOW”



NERGAL. I'D FORGOTTEN.  
HIS BLOOD IS STILL IN  
MY SYSTEM.

I'M HIDDEN BY THE MAGIC  
BUT THE BASTARD'S TRYING  
TO FLUSH ME OUT BY MAKING  
ME LOOK LIKE A "CLEARASIL"  
ADVERT.

BAD PSYCHOLOGY. NO  
ONE WOULD GO OUT  
WITH A MUSH LIKE *THIS*.

IT'S NO JOKE, THOUGH.  
I'VE BEEN HOLED UP IN  
THIS SCRAPYARD OVER A  
WEEK AND I'M STILL NO  
NEARER TO FINDING A  
WAY TO DESTROY HIM.

HOW DO YOU KILL AN  
IMMORTAL WHO'S  
BEEN SCREWING UP  
DABLERS LIKE ME  
SINCE THE FALL?

ANGER'S NOT  
ENOUGH--NOR  
HATRED.

IF IT  
WAS, I'D JUST  
TAKE HIM IN MY HANDS  
AND TEAR HIM-- BUT AS IT  
IS, HE'D TURN ME INTO  
*HAMBURGER*.

BASTARD!

NO, I NEED A  
*STRATEGY*.

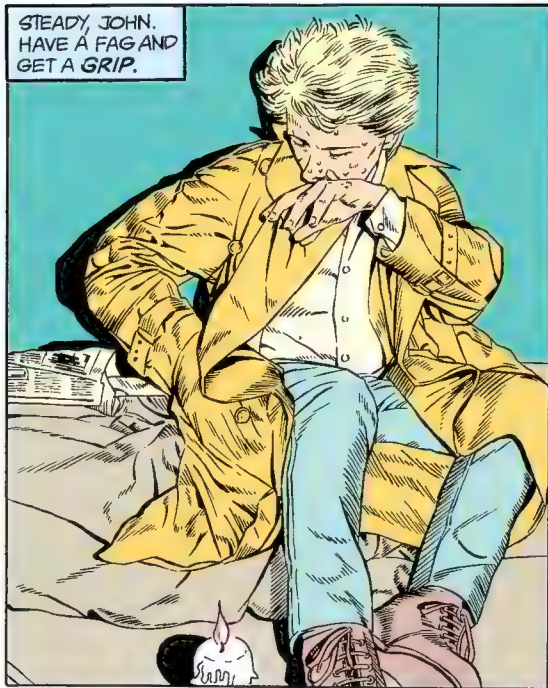
'COURSE, I'M ON MY OWN, AS  
WELL. THE *BOG GOD*'D BE  
USEFUL, BUT HE'S NOT  
INTERESTED-- TOO BUSY  
PLAYING HAPPY FAMILIES.

AND ALL MY *HUMAN* CONTACTS  
ARE EITHER DEAD, OR NOT  
ANSWERING THE PHONE.

ANYONE'D THINK I'D  
GOT SOME DISGUSTING  
*DISEASE*.

HAHAHA  
HAHAHAHA  
HAHAHA

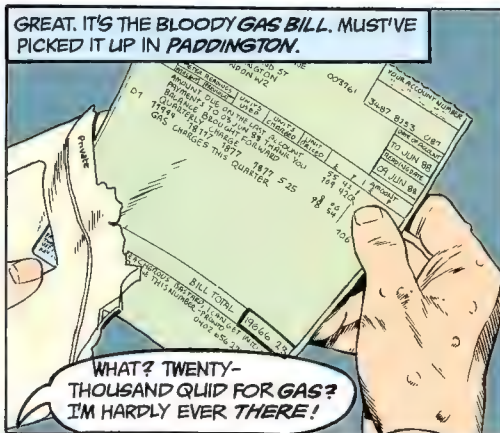




STEADY, JOHN.  
HAVE A FAG AND  
GET A GRIP.

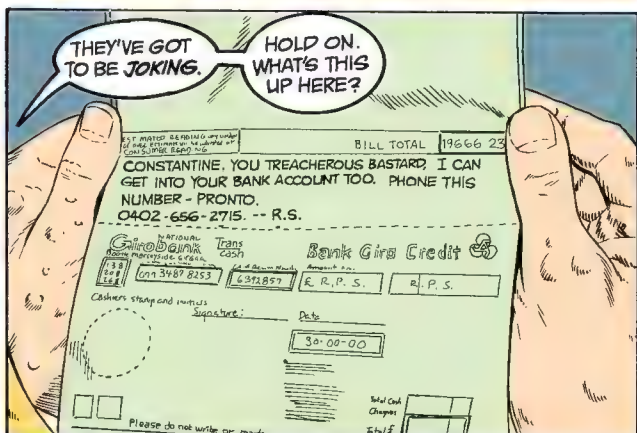


HELLO,  
WHAT'S  
THIS?



GREAT. IT'S THE BLOODY GAS BILL. MUST'VE  
PICKED IT UP IN PADDINGTON.

WHAT? TWENTY-  
THOUSAND QUID FOR GAS?  
I'M HARDLY EVER THERE!



THEY'VE GOT  
TO BE JOKING.

HOLD ON.  
WHAT'S THIS  
UP HERE?

CONSTANTINE, YOU TREACHEROUS BASTARD! I CAN  
GET INTO YOUR BANK ACCOUNT TOO. PHONE THIS  
NUMBER - PRONTO.

0402-656-2715 -- R.S.

Bank Giro Credit

Signature: R.R.P.S. R.P.S.

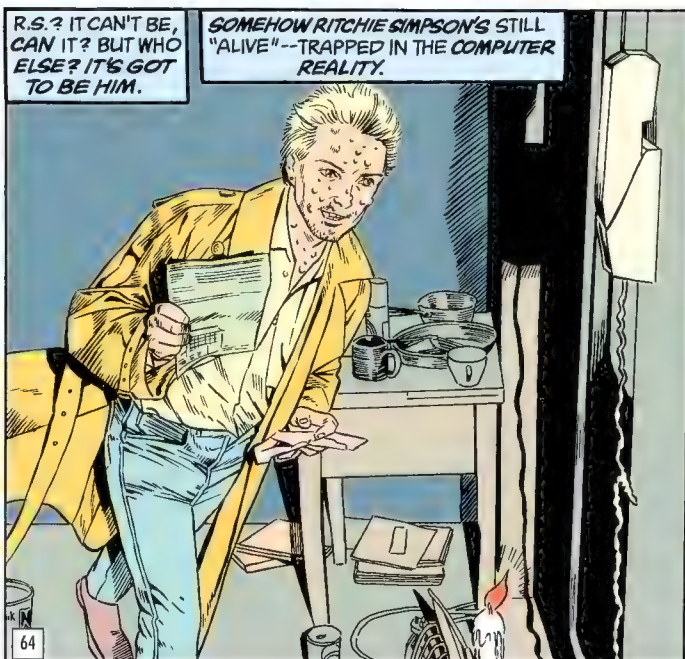
Date

50-00-00

Total Cash

Charges

Please do not write or mark



R.S.? IT CAN'T BE,  
CAN IT? BUT WHO  
ELSE? IT'S GOT  
TO BE HIM.

SOMEHOW RITCHIE SIMPSON'S STILL  
"ALIVE"--TRAPPED IN THE COMPUTER  
REALITY.



NOW THIS COULD BE THE BREAK I'VE BEEN  
WAITING FOR. STRENGTH, I HOPE WE'RE  
STILL FRIENDS.

HELLO...  
HELLO. ARE  
YOU THERE,  
MATE?



HELLO.

JOHN? IS THAT YOU?

I CAN'T BE SURE. SO MANY HALLUCINATIONS--

--EVERY SECOND A LIFETIME.

YES, MATE. IT'S ME. LISTEN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LIKE?

ALL RIGHT? HOW CAN I BE ALL RIGHT WHEN I'M LOST IN HERE?

I'M SCARED, I'M LONELY. YOU LEFT ME TOO LONG.

WHY'D YOU DO IT, JOHN?

COULDN'T BE HELPED, MATE. YOU GOT TOO CLOSE TO "HEAVEN," OR WHATEVER IT WAS, AND YOUR BODY FRITZED--WENT UP IN SMOKE.

OH GOD, NO. LISTEN, YOU'VE GOT TO GET ME OUT OF HERE.

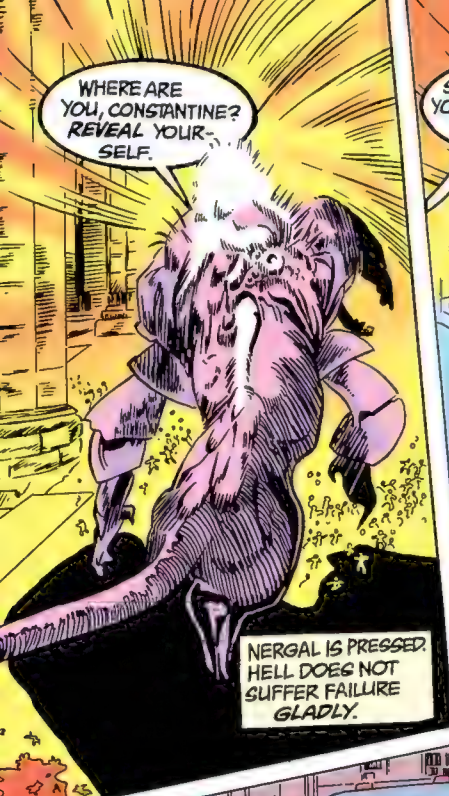
SURE, JUST TELL ME HOW.

IT'S ALL ORGANIZED. I'VE HAD NOTHING BETTER TO DO.

THERE'S A SPECIAL ORDER OF HARDWARE AT AMSTRAD. IT'S ALL PAID FOR AND WAITING TO BE DELIVERED.

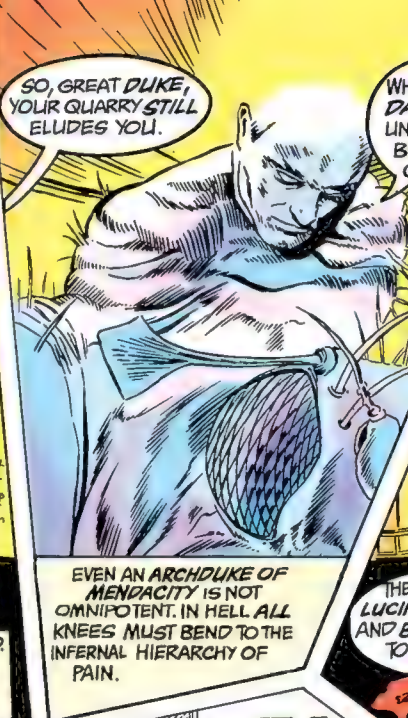
JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE.





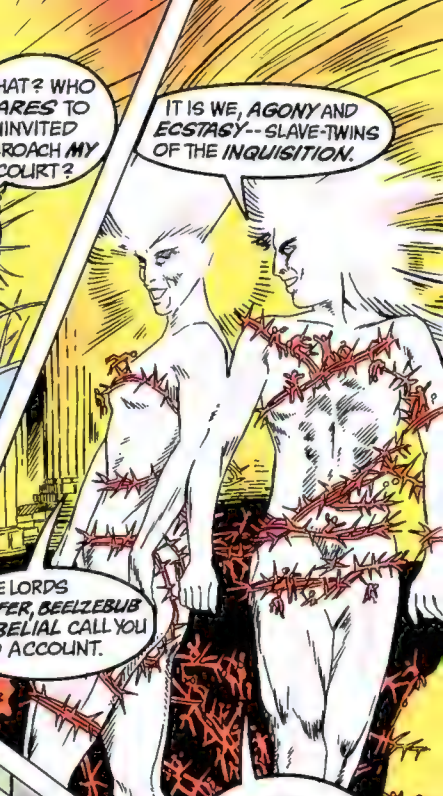
WHERE ARE YOU, CONSTANTINE? REVEAL YOURSELF.

NERGAL IS PRESSED. HELL DOES NOT SUFFER FAILURE GLADLY.



SO, GREAT DUKE, YOUR QUARRY STILL ELUDES YOU.

EVEN AN ARCHDUKE OF MENDACITY IS NOT OMNIPOTENT. IN HELL ALL KNEES MUST BEND TO THE INFERNAL HIERARCHY OF PAIN.



WHAT? WHO DARES TO UNINVITED BROACH MY COURT?

IT IS WE, AGONY AND ECSTASY--SLAVE-TWINS OF THE INQUISITION.

THE LORDS LUCIFER, BEELZEBUB AND BELIAL CALL YOU TO ACCOUNT.

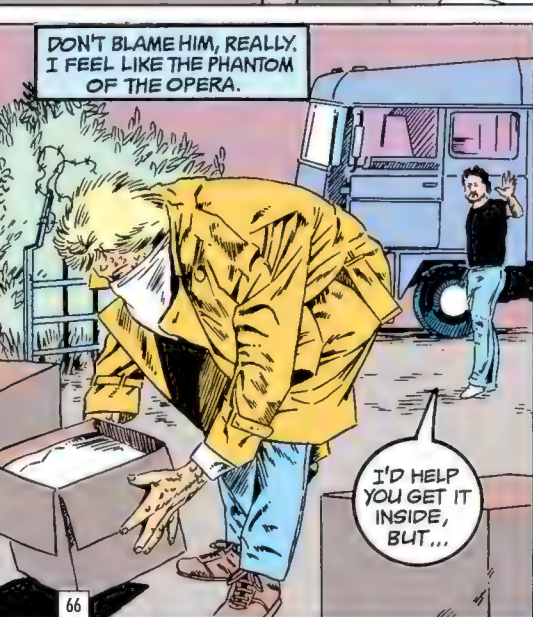
THE TRIUMVIRATE OF HADES EXPECTS THE RACKING OF THIS TEDIOUS HUMAN'S SOUL--BY DAWN.



I PHONE THE NUMBER RITCHIE GIVES ME AND, BY MORNING, THE GEARS ARRIVED.

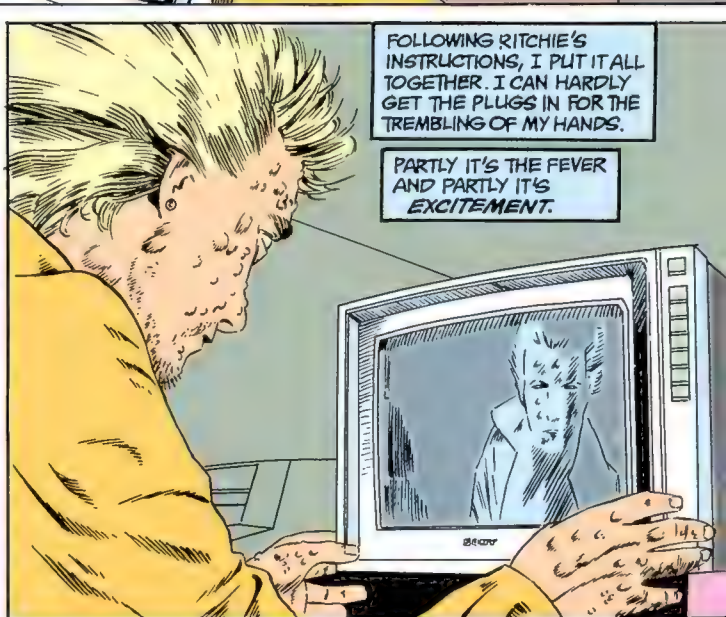
TA, MATE.

THE DELIVERY MAN CAN'T WAIT TO GET AWAY.



DON'T BLAME HIM, REALLY. I FEEL LIKE THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA.

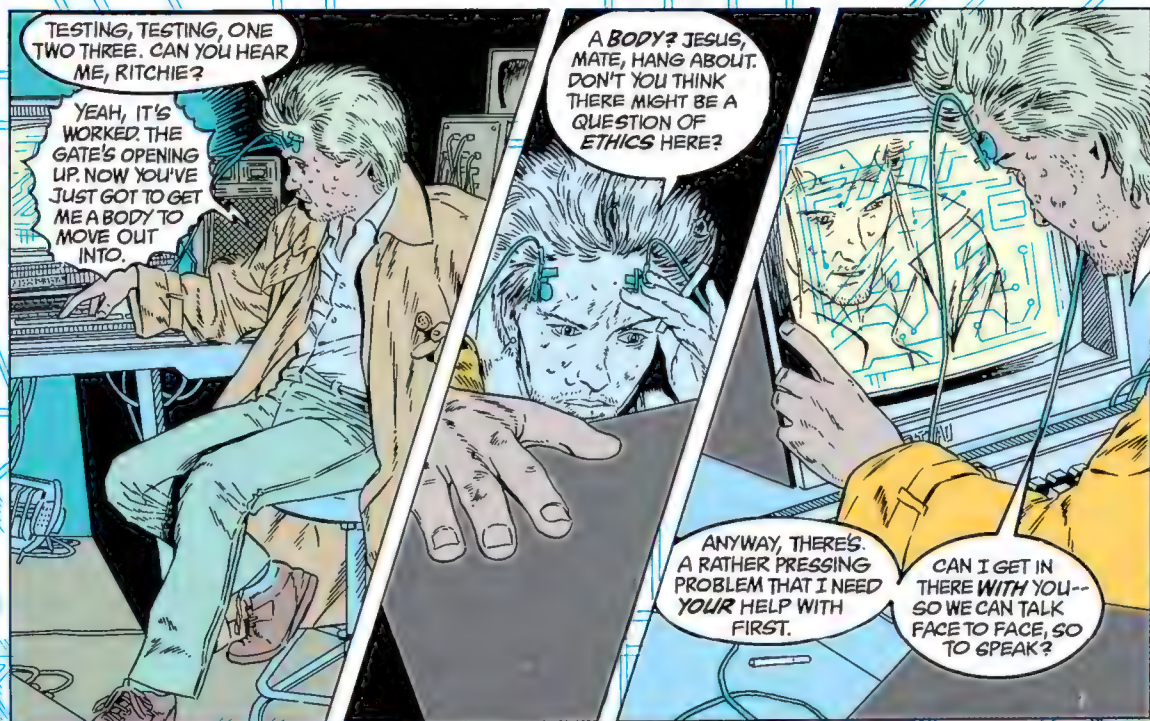
I'D HELP YOU GET IT INSIDE, BUT...



FOLLOWING RITCHIE'S INSTRUCTIONS, I PUT IT ALL TOGETHER. I CAN HARDLY GET THE PLUGS IN FOR THE TREMBLING OF MY HANDS.

PARTLY IT'S THE FEVER AND PARTLY IT'S EXCITEMENT.





TESTING, TESTING, ONE TWO THREE. CAN YOU HEAR ME, RITCHIE?

YEAH, IT'S WORKED. THE GATE'S OPENING UP. NOW YOU'VE JUST GOT TO GET ME A BODY TO MOVE OUT INTO.

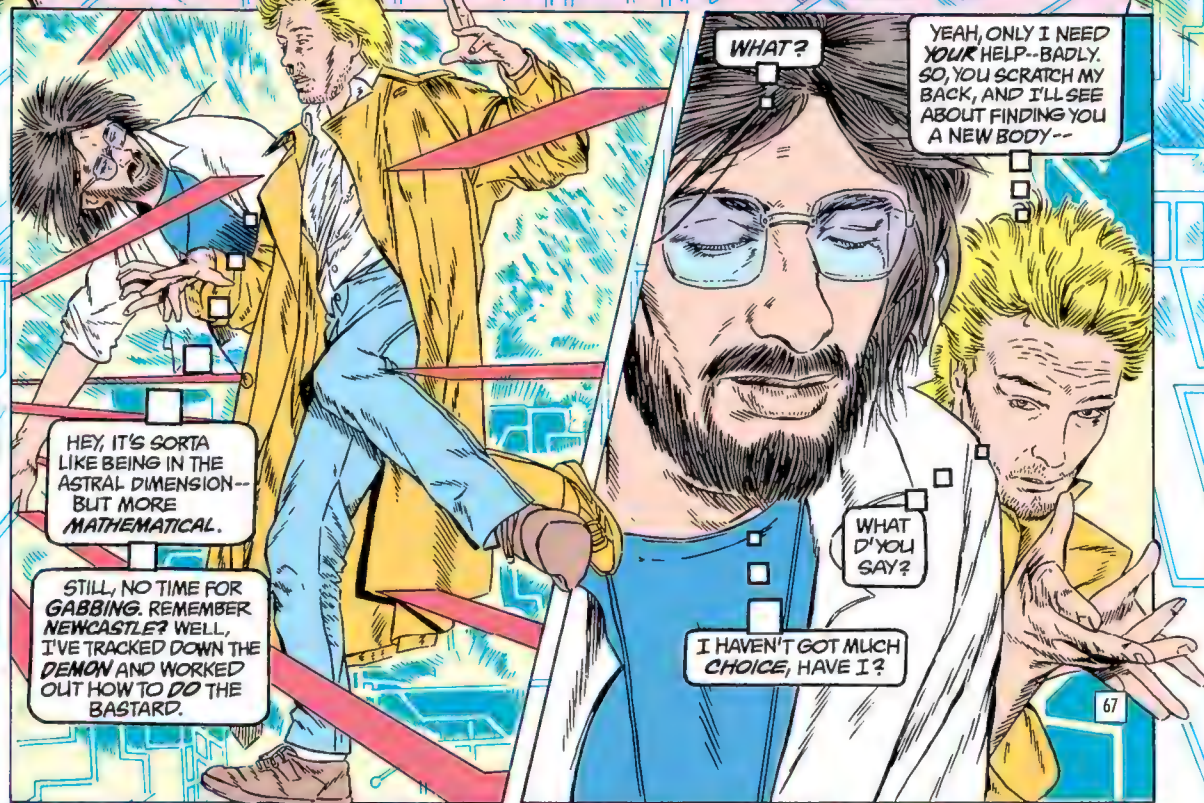
A BODY? JESUS, MATE, HANG ABOUT. DON'T YOU THINK THERE MIGHT BE A QUESTION OF ETHICS HERE?

ANYWAY, THERE'S A RATHER PRESSING PROBLEM THAT I NEED YOUR HELP WITH FIRST.

CAN I GET IN THERE WITH YOU-- SO WE CAN TALK FACE TO FACE, SO TO SPEAK?

"SURE, JUST MATCH YOUR ALPHA WAVES TO THE COMPUTER PATTERN ON THE SCREEN--

"--AND LET GO."



WHAT?

YEAH, ONLY I NEED YOUR HELP--BADLY. SO, YOU SCRATCH MY BACK, AND I'LL SEE ABOUT FINDING YOU A NEW BODY--

WHAT D'YOU SAY?

I HAVEN'T GOT MUCH CHOICE, HAVE I?

HEY, IT'S SORTA LIKE BEING IN THE ASTRAL DIMENSION-- BUT MORE MATHEMATICAL.

STILL, NO TIME FOR GABBING. REMEMBER NEWCASTLE? WELL, I'VE TRACKED DOWN THE DEMON AND WORKED OUT HOW TO DO THE BASTARD.



CHOOSE, DUKE NERGA. DO YOU COME, OR DO WE TAKE YOU?

YOU'VE FAILED. YOUR MAGIC IS WEAK. ON EARTH THE DAWN HAS COME AND GONE AND STILL HELL'S SHAME IS UNAVENGED.

CONSTANTINE'S STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT, BUT HIS MAGIC IS ARCHAIC-- IT CANNOT SUSTAIN HIM FOR MUCH LONGER.

TOO LATE, THE CHARLATAN HAS BESTED YOU.

THRICE NOW HE'S SPAT IN THE FACE OF HELL AND-- BY THE LAWS THAT BIND US--THUS WINS LIBERTY.

WHILE YOU, DUKE, ARE COMPELLED TO TIP THE SCALES OF JUSTICE IN HIS PLACE.

NO!

NERGA, NERGA--I'M GROWING OLD WAITING FOR YOU. ARE YOU AFRAID OF ME? COME TO NEWCASTLE AND TASTE DEFEAT.

HAH! IT'S HIM.

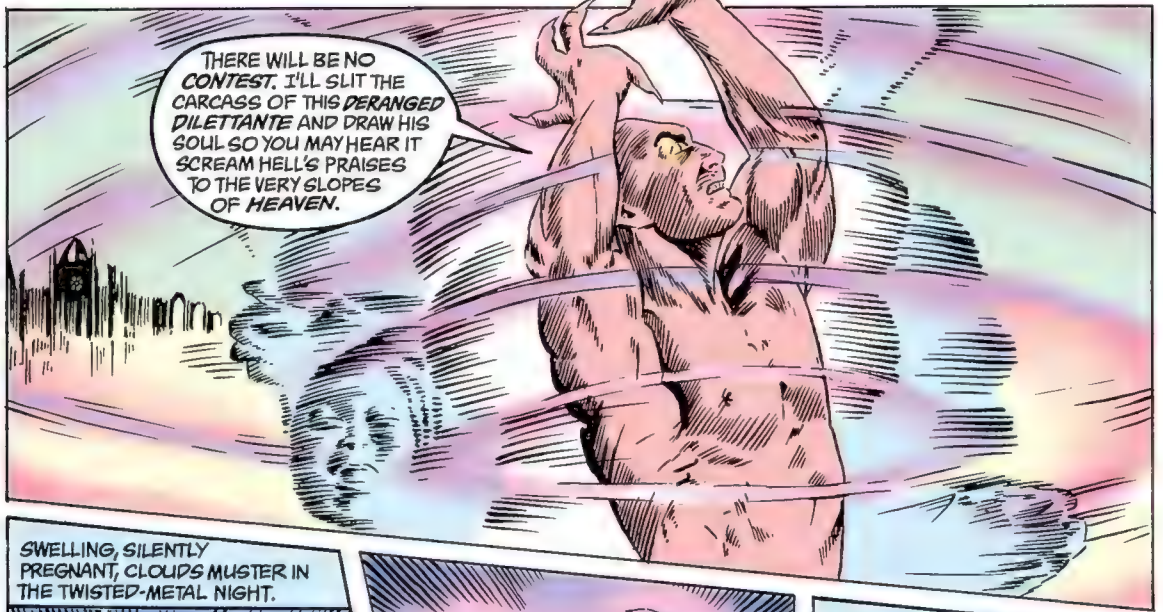
HE DARES TO CHALLENGE ME? POSTPONE YOUR DUTY, INQUISITORS--RELEASE ME.

VERY WELL, IT SEEMS THIS JESTER HAS A TASTE FOR SPORT. WE'LL WAIT UNTIL THE CONTEST HAS BEEN FOUGHT.

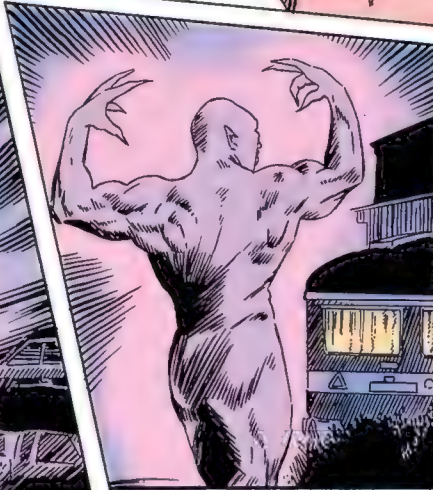
NO, PLEASE--LISTEN...

THEREFORE, YOU WILL ACCOMPANY US AND HEAR DECREED THE JUDGMENT THAT HELL'S ASSEMBLED MINISTERS HAVE AGREED.





SWELLING, SILENTLY  
PREGNANT, CLOUDS MUSTER IN  
THE TWISTED-METAL NIGHT.

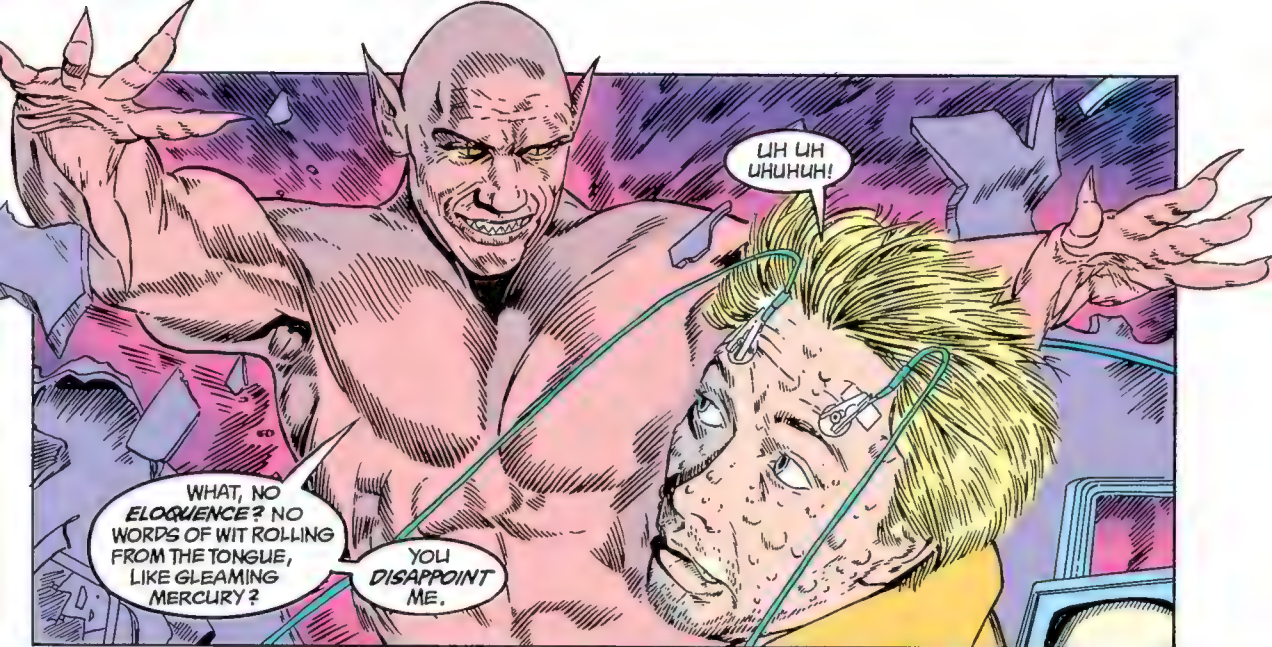


THEN SPLIT, TO CARELESSLY  
WHELP--

DROPPING VIOLENCE--  
THEIR DEFORMED OFFSPRING--  
ONTO A WAITING WORLD.







WHAT, NO ELOQUENCE? NO WORDS OF WIT ROLLING FROM THE TONGUE, LIKE GLEAMING MERCURY?

YOU DISAPPOINT ME.

UH UH UHHHH!



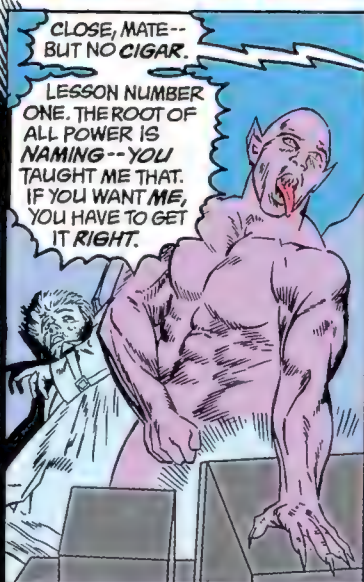
AND SO IT IS, JOHN CONSTANTINE, I CLAIM THE SOUL LONG MORTGAGED TO INFERNO-- YOU WILL ACCOMPANY ME BELOW.

BUH BUH BUH BUT...

WHAT?

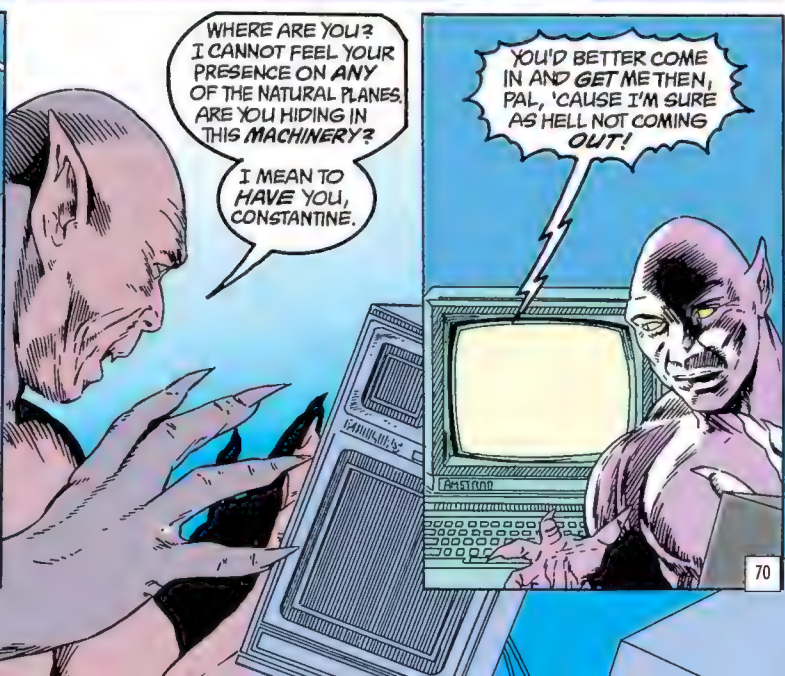
WHAT TRICKERY IS THIS NOW? THIS POXED BODY IS SURELY YOURS-- I SENSE THE KINSHIP OF OUR BLOOD. BUT THE SPIRIT WHICH DRIVES IT IS NOT YOU.

WHERE ARE YOU SKULKING-- IN THE ASTRAL REALM?



CLOSE, MATE-- BUT NO CIGAR.

LESSON NUMBER ONE. THE ROOT OF ALL POWER IS NAMING-- YOU TAUGHT ME THAT. IF YOU WANT ME, YOU HAVE TO GET IT RIGHT.



WHERE ARE YOU? I CANNOT FEEL YOUR PRESENCE ON ANY OF THE NATURAL PLANES. ARE YOU HIDING IN THIS MACHINERY?

I MEAN TO HAVE YOU, CONSTANTINE.

YOU'D BETTER COME IN AND GET ME THEN, PAL, 'CAUSE I'M SURE AS HELL NOT COMING OUT!



VERY WELL, CONSTANTINE -- BUT KNOW THAT YOUR PREVARICATION CAN ONLY SERVE TO INTENSIFY YOUR EVENTUAL MISERY.

DO LEAVE IT OUT, YOU POMPUS PRATT--

I'M GETTING BORED HANGING AROUND. MY ASSISTANT'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO FIND ME--

--IF THE RITUAL'S TOO MUCH FOR YOUR PRIMITIVE MIND TO GRASP.

JUH JUST LOOK AT THE SCREEN, STUDY THE PATTERNS AND MOVE OUT OF YOUR BODY--

PAH! SCIENCE-- THE GAMES OF CHILDREN. MERE PRESTIDIGITATION.

"--INTO THE ELECTRONIC REALITY."

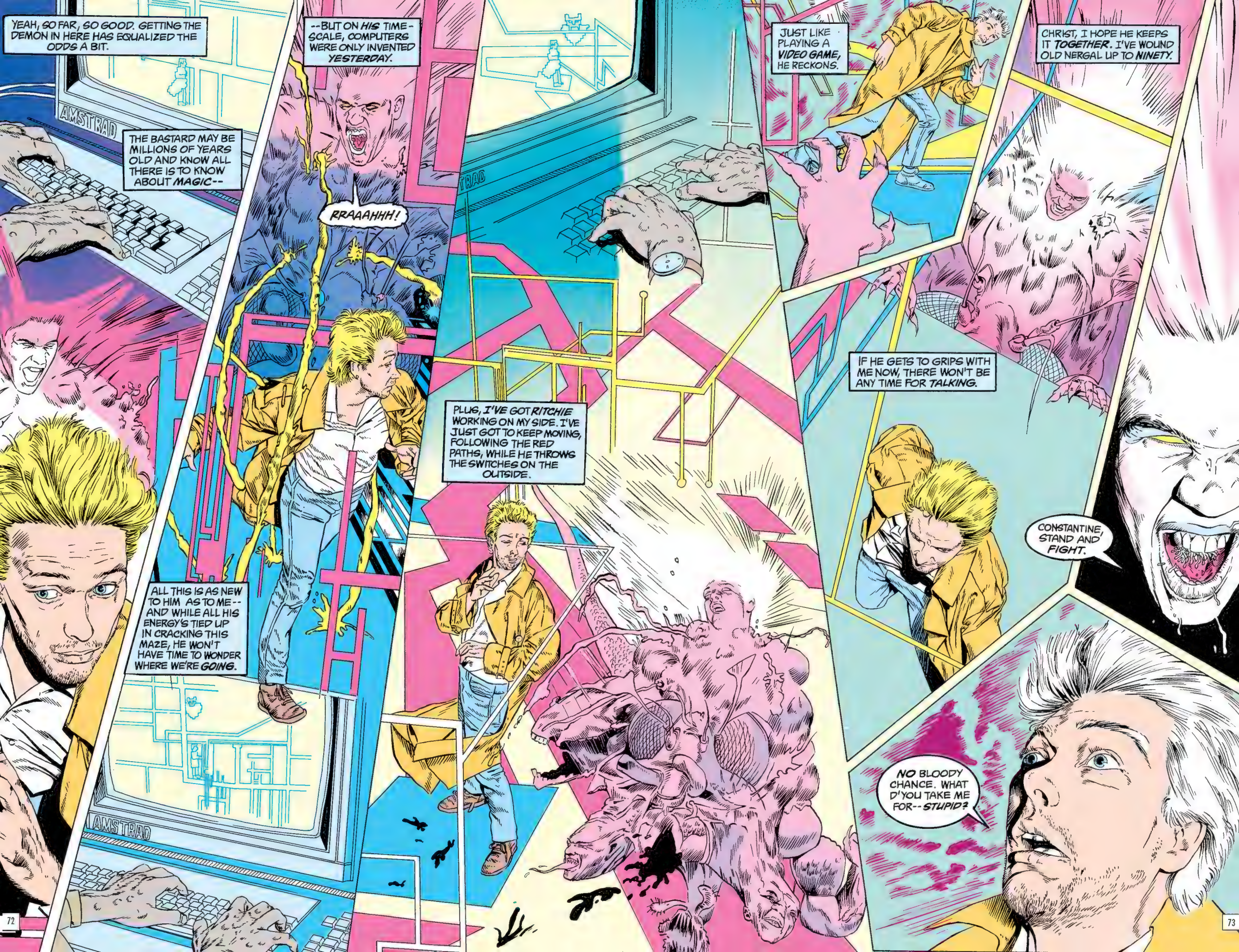
DO YOU THINK THAT HIDING IN THIS PLAYGROUND WILL HELP YOU CONQUER ME?

IN A WORD-- YES.

YAAAAAH!

UH-OH!





YEAH, SO FAR, SO GOOD. GETTING THE DEMON IN HERE HAS EQUALIZED THE ODDS A BIT.

--BUT ON HIS TIME-SCALE, COMPUTERS WERE ONLY INVENTED YESTERDAY.

JUST LIKE PLAYING A VIDEO GAME, HE RECKONS.

CHRIST, I HOPE HE KEEPS IT TOGETHER. I'VE WOUND OLD NERVAL UP TO NINETY.

THE BASTARD MAY BE MILLIONS OF YEARS OLD AND KNOW ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT MAGIC--

RRAAAHHH!

PLUS, I'VE GOT RITCHIE WORKING ON MY SIDE. I'VE JUST GOT TO KEEP MOVING, FOLLOWING THE RED PATHS, WHILE HE THROWS THE SWITCHES ON THE OUTSIDE.

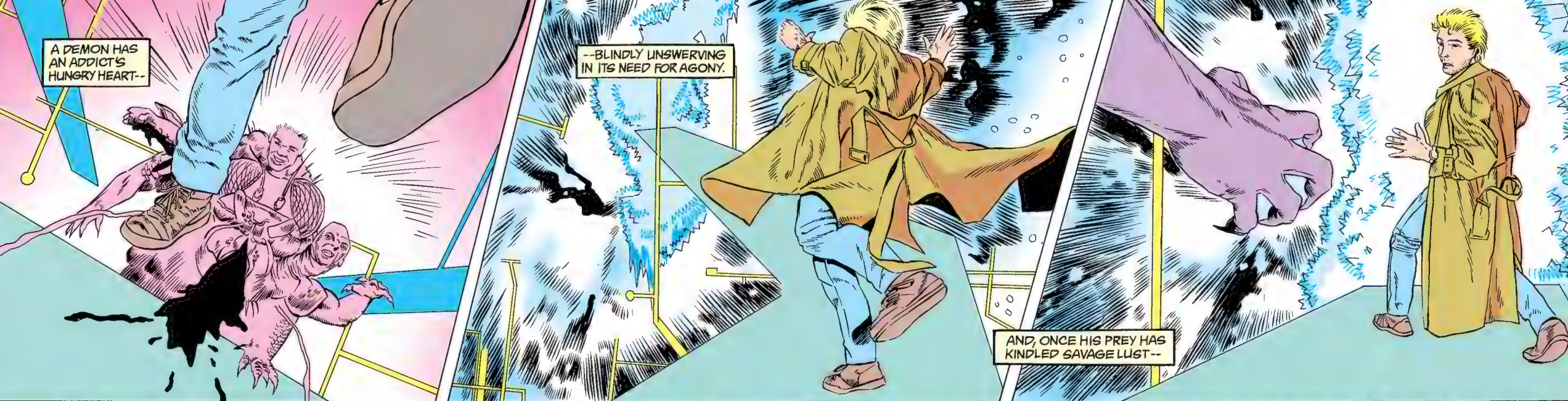
IF HE GETS TO GRIPS WITH ME NOW, THERE WON'T BE ANY TIME FOR TALKING.

ALL THIS IS AS NEW TO HIM AS TO ME-- AND WHILE ALL HIS ENERGY'S TIED UP IN CRACKING THIS MAZE, HE WON'T HAVE TIME TO WONDER WHERE WE'RE GOING.

CONSTANTINE, STAND AND FIGHT.

NO BLOODY CHANCE. WHAT D'YOU TAKE ME FOR-- STUPID?

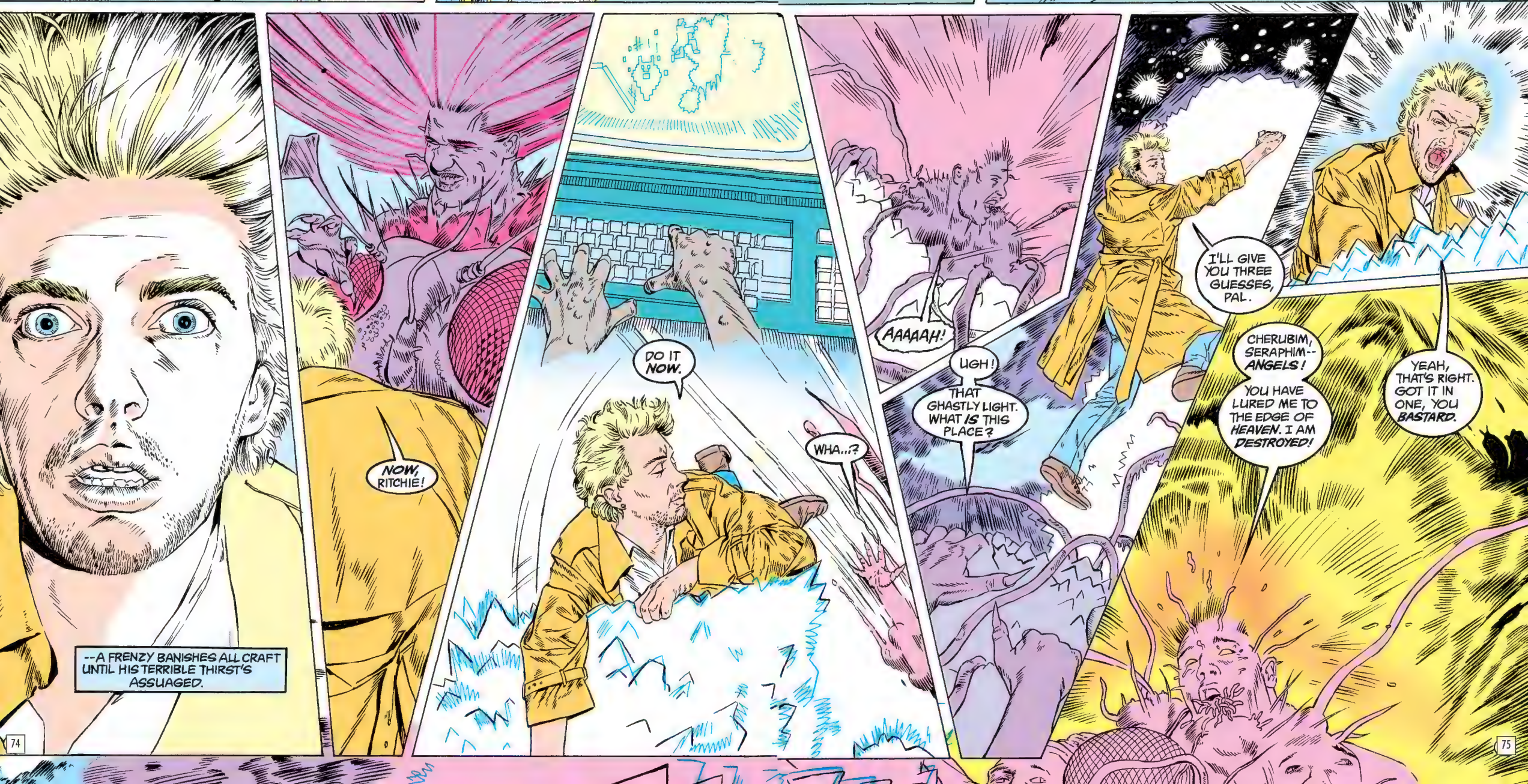




A DEMON HAS  
AN ADDICT'S  
HUNGRY HEART--

--BLINDLY UNSWERVING  
IN ITS NEED FOR AGONY.

AND, ONCE HIS PREY HAS  
KINDLED SAVAGE LUST--



--A FRENZY BANISHES ALL CRAFT  
UNTIL HIS TERRIBLE THIRST'S  
ASSUAGED.

NOW,  
RITCHIE!

DO IT  
NOW.

WHA...?

AAAAAH!

LIGH!

THAT  
GHASTLY LIGHT.  
WHAT IS THIS  
PLACE?

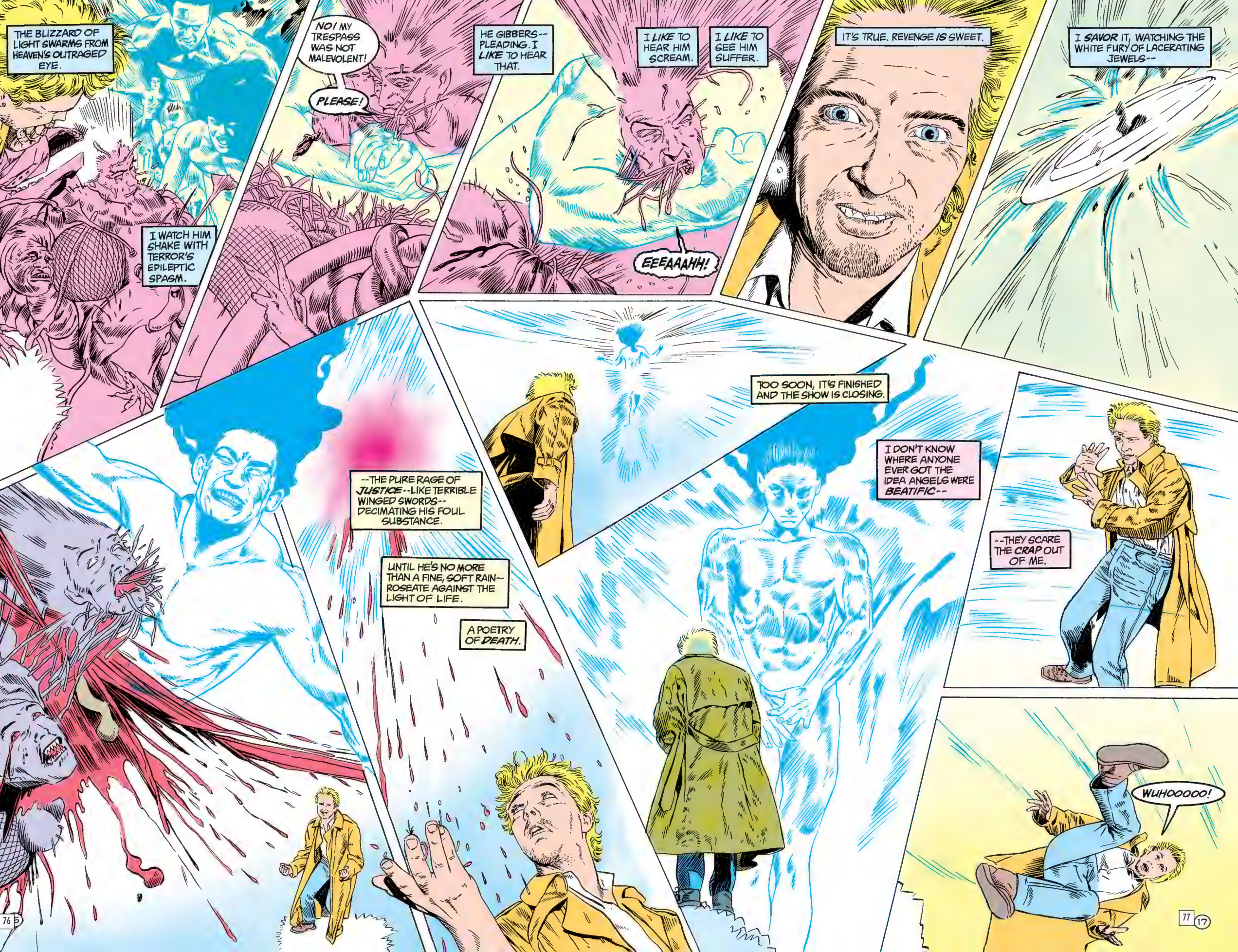
I'LL GIVE  
YOU THREE  
GUESSES,  
PAL.

CHERUBIM,  
SERAPHIM--  
ANGELS!

YOU HAVE  
LURED ME TO  
THE EDGE OF  
HEAVEN. I AM  
DESTROYED!

YEAH,  
THAT'S RIGHT.  
GOT IT IN  
ONE, YOU  
BASTARD.





THE BLIZZARD OF LIGHT SWARMS FROM HEAVEN'S OUTRAGED EYE.

NO! MY TRESPASS WAS NOT MALEVOLENT!

PLEASE!

HE GIBBERS-- PLEADING. I LIKE TO HEAR THAT.

I LIKE TO HEAR HIM SCREAM.

I LIKE TO SEE HIM SUFFER.

IT'S TRUE. REVENGE IS SWEET.

I SAVOR IT, WATCHING THE WHITE FURY OF LACERATING JEWELS--

I WATCH HIM SHAKE WITH TERROR'S EPILEPTIC SPASM.

EEEEAAHH!

TOO SOON, IT'S FINISHED AND THE SHOW IS CLOSING.

--THE PURE RAGE OF JUSTICE-- LIKE TERRIBLE WINGED SWORDS-- DECIMATING HIS FOUL SUBSTANCE.

UNTIL HE'S NO MORE THAN A FINE, SOFT RAIN-- ROSEATE AGAINST THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

A POETRY OF DEATH.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE ANYONE EVER GOT THE IDEA ANGELS WERE BEATIFIC--

--THEY SCARE THE CRAP OUT OF ME.

WUHOOOOO!

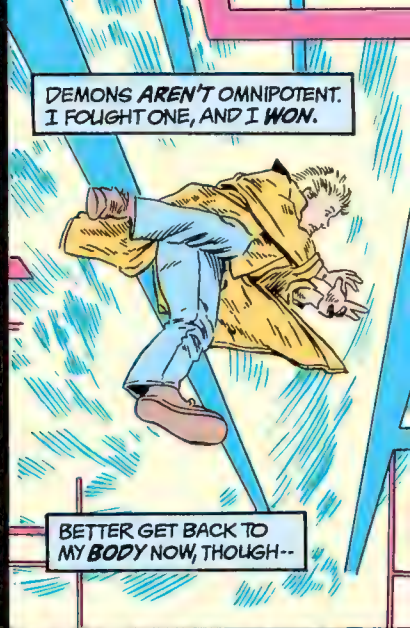




I GUESS THAT'S AS CLOSE TO HEAVEN AS I'M EVER LIKELY TO GET.

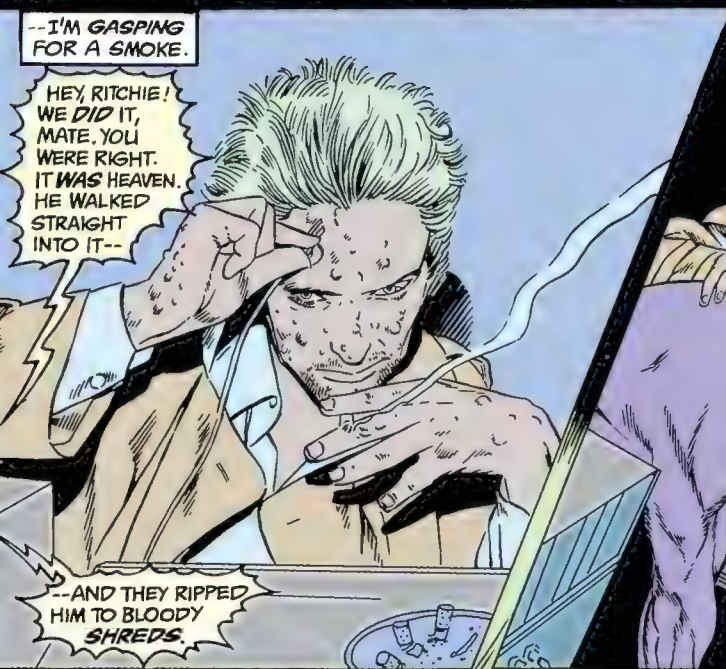


JESUS, THOUGH, I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE THAT I DID IT-- ANNIHILATED HIM, COMPLETELY OBLITERATED HIM.



DEMONS AREN'T OMNIPOTENT. I FOUGHT ONE, AND I WON.

BETTER GET BACK TO MY **BODY** NOW, THOUGH--



--I'M GASPING FOR A SMOKE.

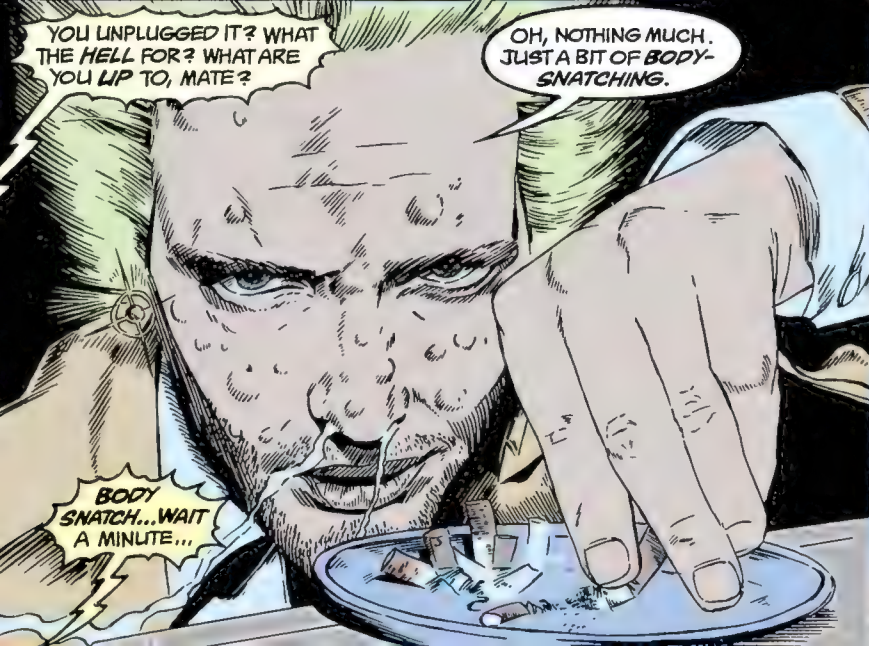
HEY, RITCHIE! WE DID IT, MATE. YOU WERE RIGHT. IT WAS HEAVEN. HE WALKED STRAIGHT INTO IT--

--AND THEY RIPPED HIM TO BLOODY SHREDS.



WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS BODY? DID IT SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUST, LIKE YOURS DID?

NO, JOHN. I UNPLUGGED IT.



YOU UNPLUGGED IT? WHAT THE HELL FOR? WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, MATE?

OH, NOTHING MUCH. JUST A BIT OF BODY-SNATCHING.

BODY SNATCH...WAIT A MINUTE...



I'M SORRY, JOHN--BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME TO GO BACK IN THERE VOLUNTARILY.

YOU'RE BEING EVICTED.





NOW,  
RITCHIE...

AND WHO KNOWS **WHAT**  
MISCHIEF YOU MIGHT GET UP  
TO IF I LET YOU INTO THE  
**DEMON'S** EMPTY SHELL.

THE WORLD'LL BE  
A SAFER PLACE WITH  
YOU **THERE**.



IT'S DYING, MATE--RIDDLED  
WITH DISEASE. WHY ELSE DO  
YOU THINK I'D CHANCE A  
CRAZY STUNT LIKE THIS?

BUT...

I GIVE  
YOU THREE  
DAYS AT  
**MOST**.



YOU WHAT?

≡ KOFF  
KOFF KOFF  
KOROFF  
KOFF ≡

OH WELL,  
SUIT YOURSELF,  
MATE. THAT BODY'S  
TOTALLY CROCKED  
ANYWAY--IN CASE  
YOU HADN'T  
NOTICED.



DAMN YOU,  
CONSTANTINE.

IT'S  
ALREADY  
BEEN TRIED,  
PAL.

LOOK,  
YOUR **BEST**  
CHANCE HAS GOT  
TO BE IN THE **DEMON'S**  
BODY--WHAT'VE  
YOU GOT TO LOSE?



YES, YES,  
MAYBE YOU'RE  
**RIGHT**.

THINK OF  
THE **POWER**,  
RITCHIE.

YES.



YOU COULD DO  
**ANYTHING**.

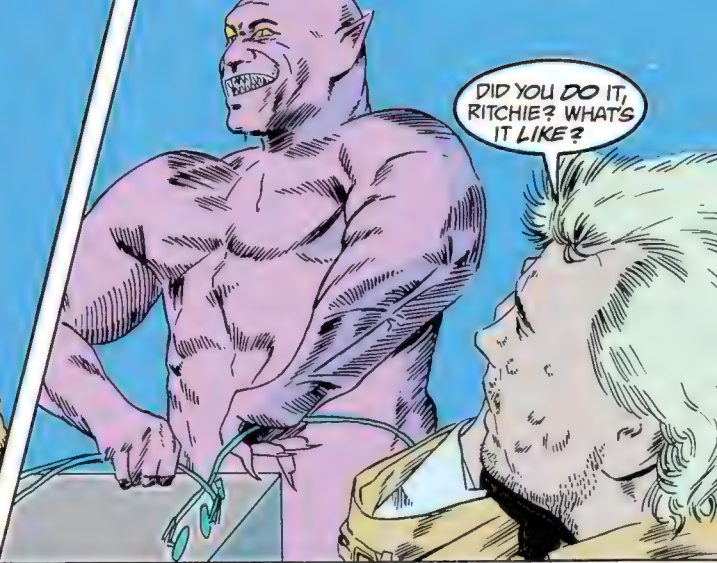
YES.





WHAT DO YOU SAY, RITCHIE?

YES.



DID YOU DO IT, RITCHIE? WHAT'S IT LIKE?



OOHHHH OOOOHH. IT'S SO HUGE AND DARK. LIKE A SHIPWRECK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN'S DEEPEST TRENCH.

THERE ARE SNAGGING HOOKS WHICH TEAR ME--

THERE'S ROT AND PUTREFACTION--

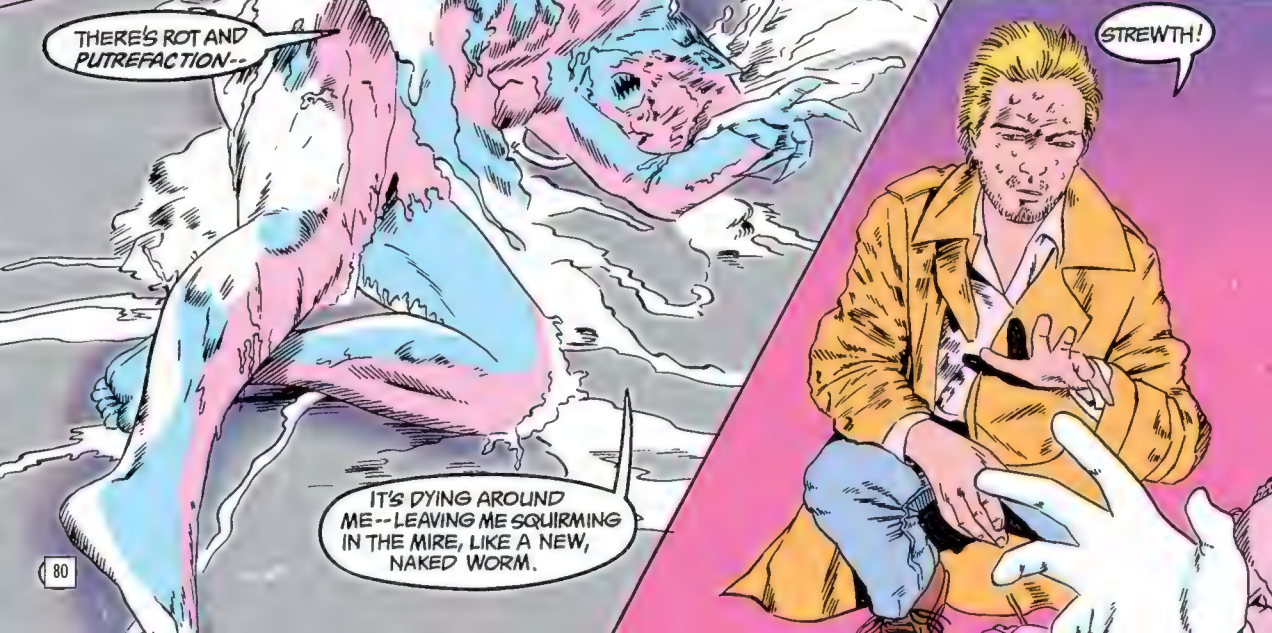


THERE ARE BRITTLE, SCUTTILING THINGS, LIKE CRABS MADE OF GLASS--

--AND A HOWLING, LIKE A CONSTANT WIND OF TORTURED SOULS.



IT'S TOO BIG. IT'S STRETCHING ME. I CAN'T FILL IT.



IT'S DYING AROUND ME-- LEAVING ME SQUIRMING IN THE MIRE, LIKE A NEW, NAKED WORM.

STRENGTH!

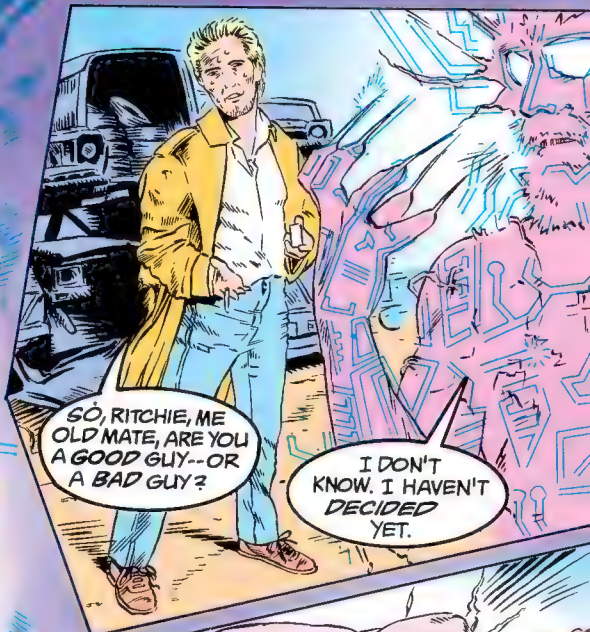


BUT AS THIS  
BODY DIES, I BUILD  
ANOTHER MORE  
SUITED TO MY NEEDS--  
AND LIVE.

AHHH, CONSTANTINE.  
IF YOU ONLY KNEW. WITH  
THE ENERGY THAT'S  
COURSING THROUGH ME,  
I COULD RULE THE  
WORLD.

OH  
BLOODY  
HELL.

AS IF THERE AREN'T  
ENOUGH MEGALO-  
MANIAC MUTANTS  
AND SUPER-POWERED  
FREAKS ROAMING  
ABOUT THIS SORRY  
PLANET ALREADY.

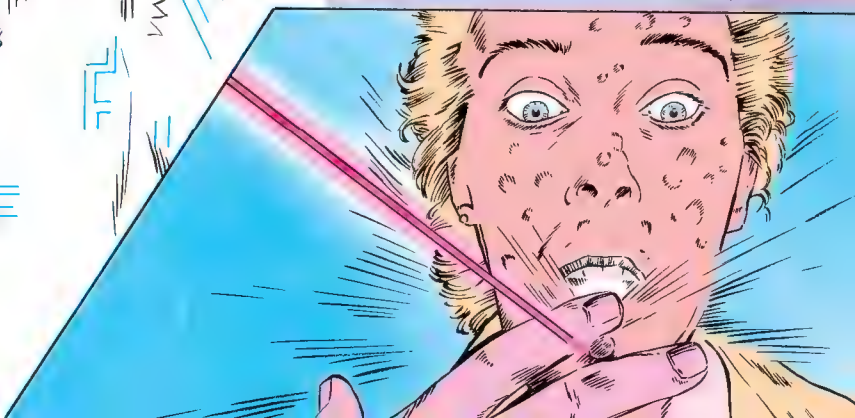


SO, RITCHIE, ME  
OLD MATE, ARE YOU  
A GOOD GUY--OR  
A BAD GUY?

I DON'T  
KNOW. I HAVEN'T  
DECIDED  
YET.

I S'POSE  
YOU'LL BE  
CHANGING YOUR  
NAME, TOO. RITCHIE  
SIMPSON'S NOT MUCH  
OF A HANDLE WHEN  
IT COMES TO A  
TOUGH IMAGE,  
IS IT?

GOT A  
LIGHT?







TA.

OH WELL,  
BETTER THE  
DEVIL YOU  
KNOW--

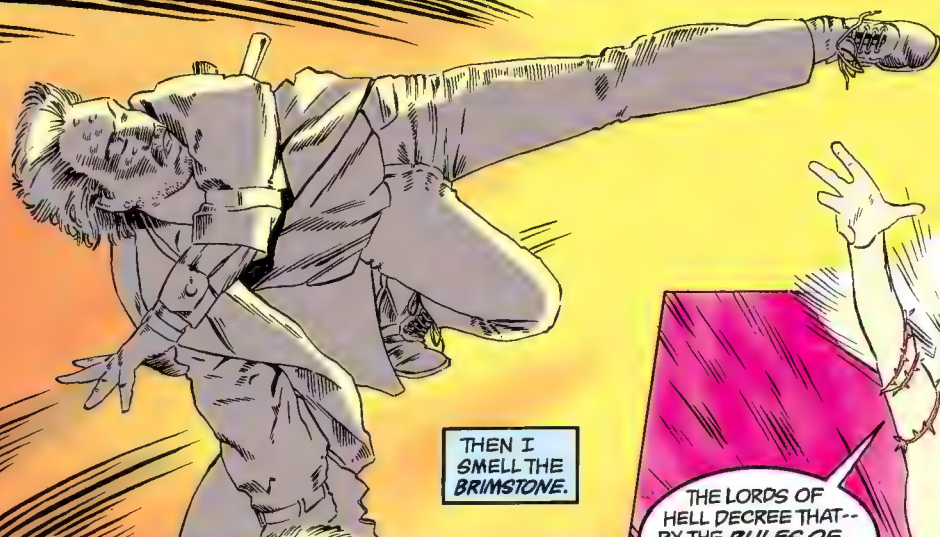
QUIET.



SOMETHING'S  
COMING.

--THAN THE  
ONE YOU  
DON'T.

FOR A MOMENT I THINK IT MIGHT  
BE A LIGHTNING-STRIKE.

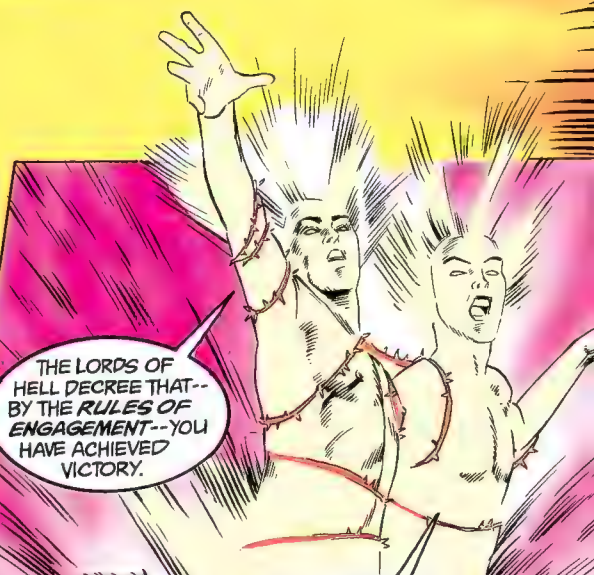


THEN I  
SMELL THE  
BRIMSTONE.

I SUPPOSE IT  
WAS TOO GOOD  
TO BE TRUE. I  
SHOULD'VE  
KNOWN HELL  
WOULD BE A  
SORE LOSER.

CONSTANTINE.

YEAH?



THE LORDS OF  
HELL DECREE THAT--  
BY THE RULES OF  
ENGAGEMENT--YOU  
HAVE ACHIEVED  
VICTORY.

BUT DO NOT THINK,  
BECAUSE THIS ONCE  
YOU'VE VANQUISHED A  
SENILE DEMON, YOU  
WOULD BE SO  
FORTUNATE AGAIN.





YOU  
MEAN THAT'S  
IT? I CAN  
GO?

OF COURSE. HELL IS  
ETERNAL AND WE KNOW  
THAT WHEN YOUR TIME IN  
THIS PLACE IS OVER--

--YOU'LL JOIN US  
WILLINGLY IN THE  
OTHER.

WELL, MAYBE  
CATCH YOU LATER,  
THEN.

BUT I  
WOULDN'T  
HOLD YOUR  
BREATH.

**KRAK!**

LET US TELL YOU,  
IT IS NOT SO!

NOT YOU,  
IMPOSTOR!

FOOL! DO YOU  
THINK THAT IT IS  
PERMITTED TO SO  
CASUALLY TAKE ON THE  
MANTLE OF A DEVIL AND  
STRUT THE WORLD, AS IF IT  
WERE A STAGE ON WHICH  
YOU ACTED OUT  
YOUR WHIMS?

WE ARE THE  
SLAVE-TWINS OF  
THE INQUISITION.  
YOU ARE  
COMMITTED TO  
OUR CUSTODY--

WHERE, UNDER TORTURE,  
YOU MUST SPEND AT LEAST  
TEN-THOUSAND YEARS  
DISCOVERING THE MILLION  
DEGREES OF AGONY--

--AND ECSTASY.

ONE DAY,  
PERHAPS, WHEN  
YOU HAVE LEARNED  
YOUR CRAFT AND  
RISEN THROUGH THE  
RANKS, YOU MAY  
BE ALLOWED TO  
TRAVEL BEYOND  
PURGATORY.

--AND WILL  
ACCOMPANY US  
BELOW.

**NOOOOO!**



CHRIST, THOSE TWO BASTARDS  
MADE OLD *NERGAL* SEEM  
ALMOST CUDDLY. POOR OLD  
RITCHIE -- NEVER WOULD'VE  
THOUGHT HE HAD IT IN HIM.

STILL, IT'S ALWAYS THE  
*QUIET* ONES-- ENNIT?

I S'POSE I SHOULD FEEL  
SORRIER FOR HIM THAN I  
DO-- BUT, RIGHT NOW, ALL  
I REALLY FEEL IS A SORT  
OF EMPTY, LIGHT-HEADED  
*RELIEF*.

IT'S AS IF THE COILS OF  
A HUGE, CONSTRICTING  
SNAKE, THAT'S BEEN  
SQUEEZING THE  
LIFE OUT OF ME  
FOR THE PAST TEN  
YEARS, HAD  
SLIPPED AWAY--

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE  
*NEWCASTLE*, WHEN I POISONED  
MYSELF WITH A STUPID LUST FOR  
POWER, I'M CONSCIOUS OF  
STANDING ON THE BRINK OF  
*FUTURE* -- RATHER THAN THE  
TAIL OF *PAST*.

--AND I CAN  
*BREATHE*  
AGAIN.

I SOUGHT OUT MY DEMON AND  
CONQUERED HIM. NOW, IF THIS  
SPECIES IS GOING TO HAVE ANY  
CHANCE OF SURVIVAL, WE ALL  
HAVE TO FACE THE DEMONS  
INSIDE US.

WE HAVE TO TURN INWARDS.  
ENTER *THE SIEGE PERILOUS*--  
AND *WRESTLE*. IT'S NOT THOSE  
GROTESQUE, TIRED INSTITUTIONS  
OF HEAVEN AND HELL THAT  
ARE THE PROBLEM--

--IT'S THE  
DEVILS WE  
*KNOW*.





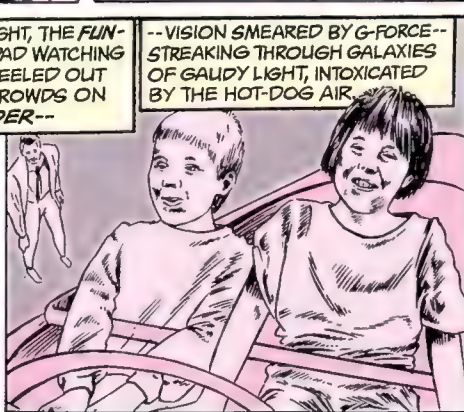
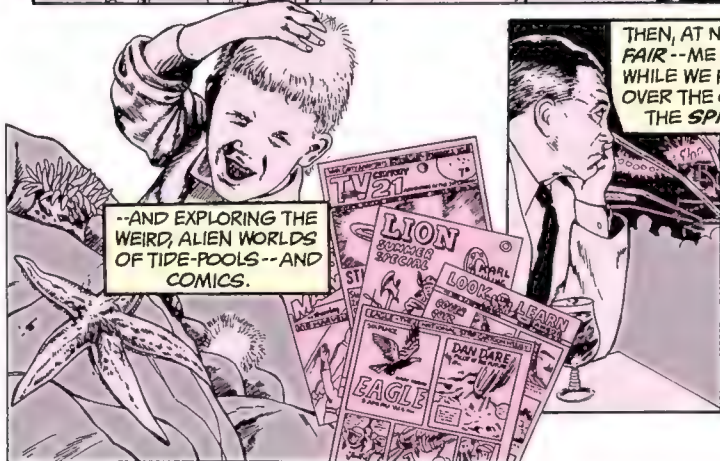
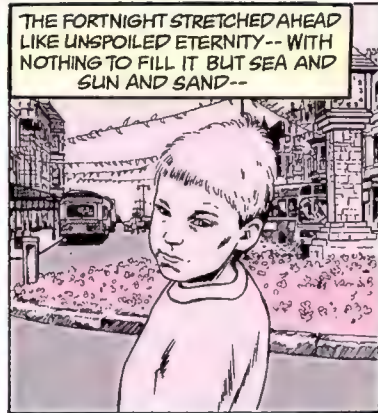
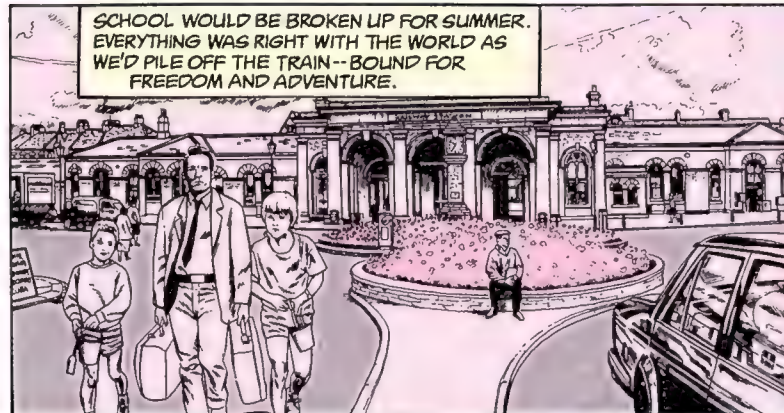
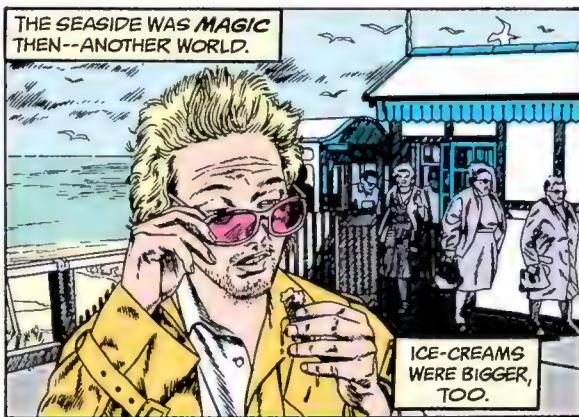
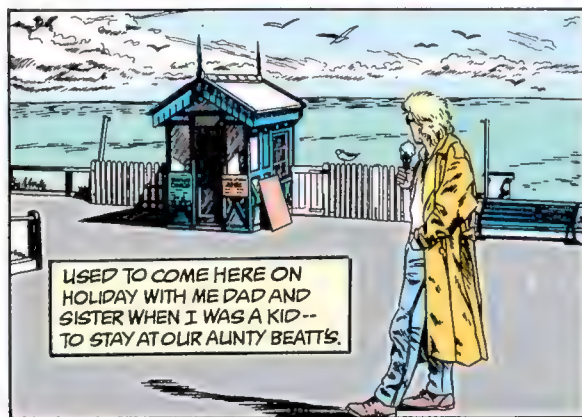
For the artist's use

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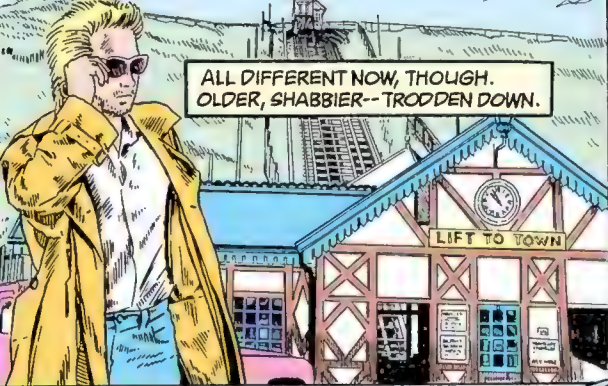




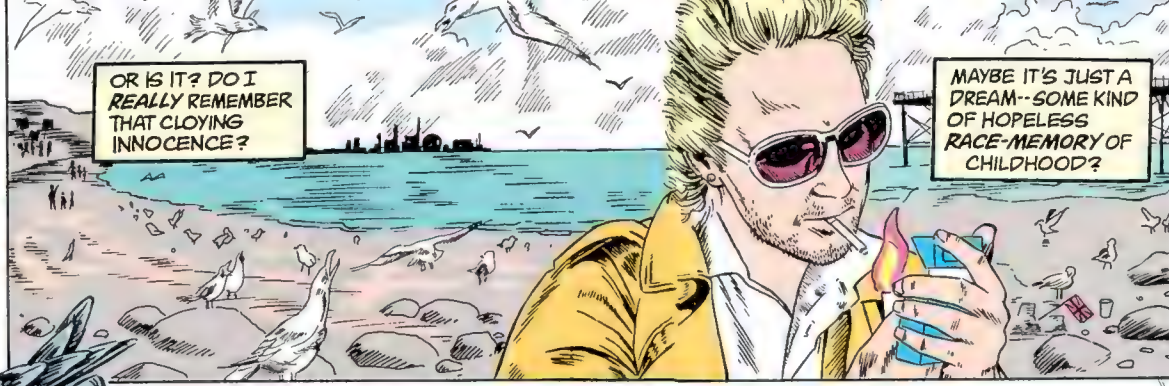






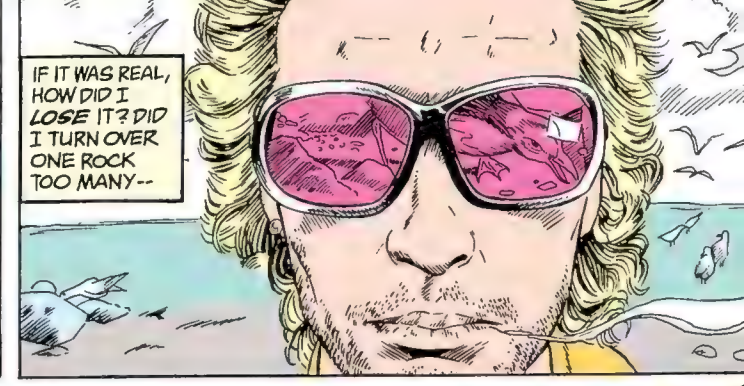


ALL DIFFERENT NOW, THOUGH.  
OLDER, SHABBIER--TRODDEN DOWN.

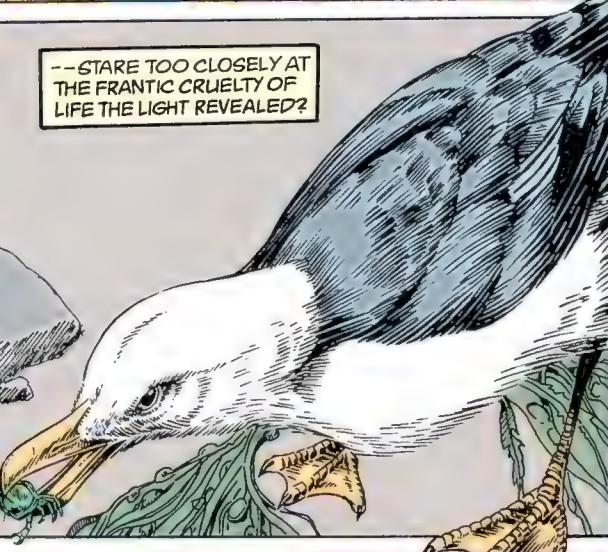


OR IS IT? DO I  
REALLY REMEMBER  
THAT CLOYING  
INNOCENCE?

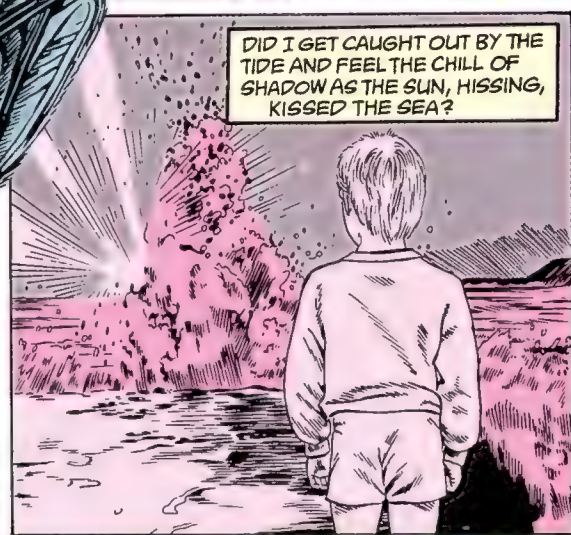
MAYBE IT'S JUST A  
DREAM--SOME KIND  
OF HOPELESS  
RACE-MEMORY OF  
CHILDHOOD?



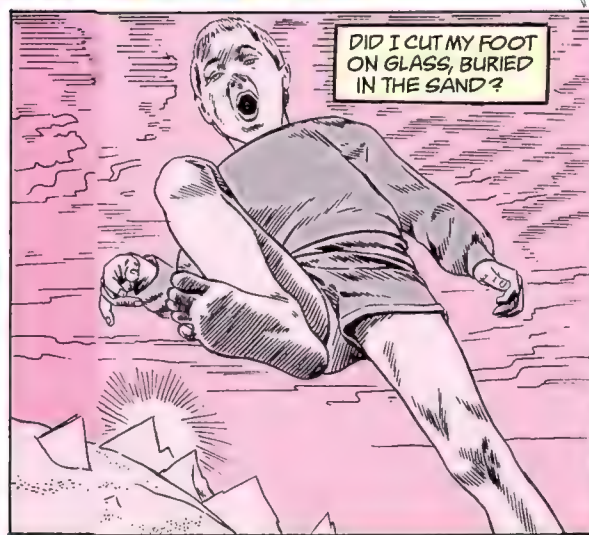
IF IT WAS REAL,  
HOW DID I  
LOSE IT? DID  
I TURN OVER  
ONE ROCK  
TOO MANY--



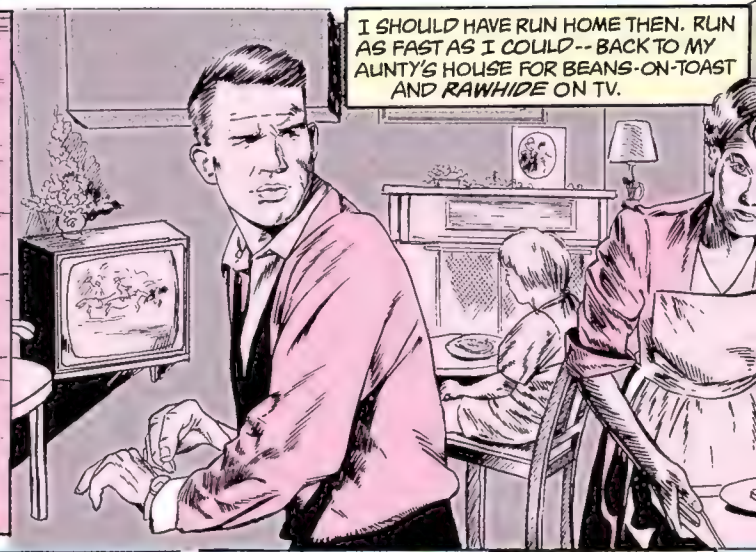
--STARE TOO CLOSELY AT  
THE FRANTIC CRUELTY OF  
LIFE THE LIGHT REVEALED?



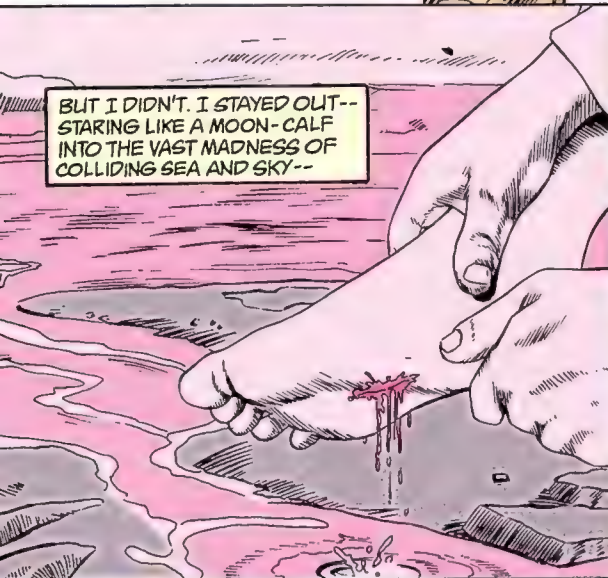
DID I GET CAUGHT OUT BY THE  
TIDE AND FEEL THE CHILL OF  
SHADOW AS THE SUN, HISSING,  
KISSED THE SEA?



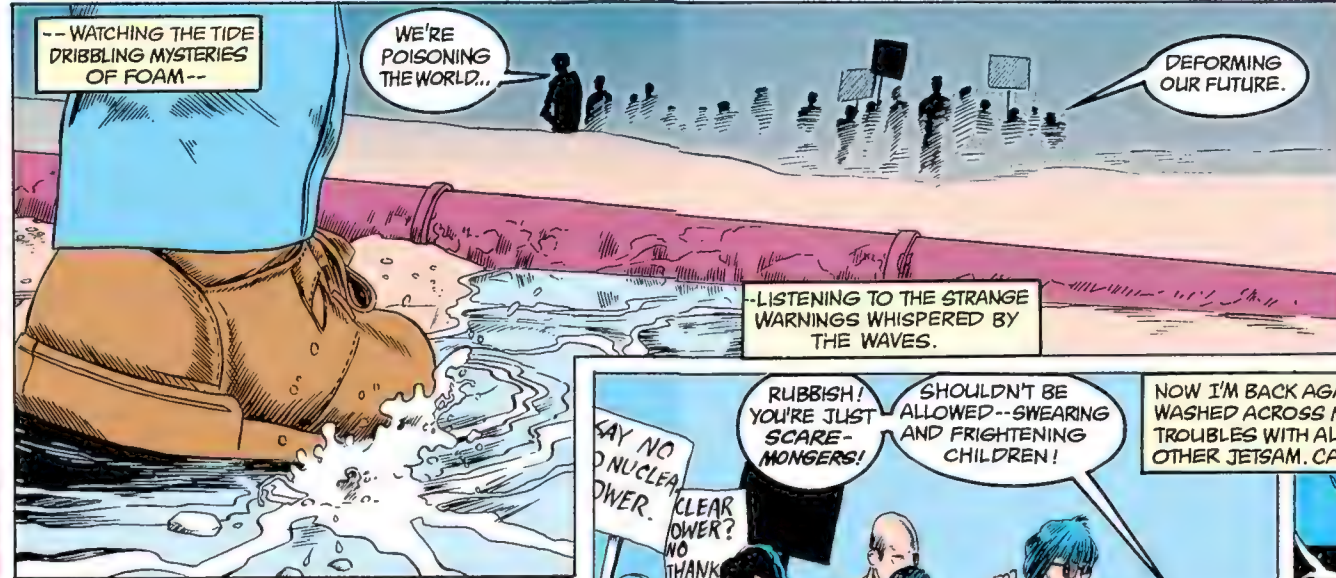
DID I CUT MY FOOT  
ON GLASS, BURIED  
IN THE SAND?



I SHOULD HAVE RUN HOME THEN. RUN  
AS FAST AS I COULD--BACK TO MY  
AUNTY'S HOUSE FOR BEANS-ON-TOAST  
AND RAWHIDE ON TV.



BUT I DIDN'T. I STAYED OUT--  
STARING LIKE A MOON-CALF  
INTO THE VAST MADNESS OF  
COLLIDING SEA AND SKY--

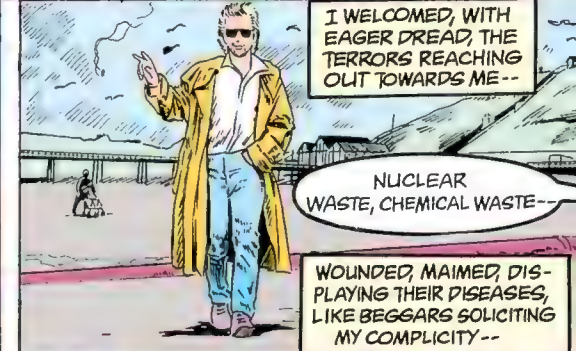


--WATCHING THE TIDE  
DRIBBLING MYSTERIES  
OF FOAM--

WE'RE  
POISONING  
THE WORLD..

DEFORMING  
OUR FUTURE.

--LISTENING TO THE STRANGE  
WARNINGS WHISPERED BY  
THE WAVES.



I WELCOMED, WITH  
EAGER DREAD, THE  
TERRORS REACHING  
OUT TOWARDS ME--

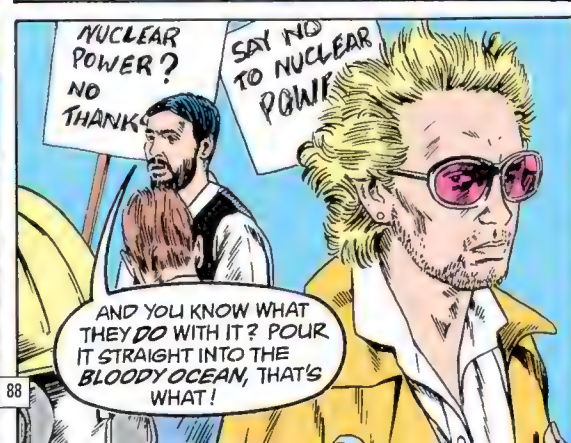
NUCLEAR  
WASTE, CHEMICAL WASTE--

WOUNDED, MAIMED, DIS-  
PLAYING THEIR DISEASES,  
LIKE BEGGARS SOLICITING  
MY COMPLICITY--



--INVITING ME TO TASTE THEIR FEAR  
AND SHARE THEIR PAIN AND GRIEF.

--RAW  
SEWAGE!



NUCLEAR  
POWER?  
NO THANKS

SAY NO  
TO NUCLEAR  
POWER

AND YOU KNOW WHAT  
THEY DO WITH IT? POUR  
IT STRAIGHT INTO THE  
BLOODY OCEAN, THAT'S  
WHAT!

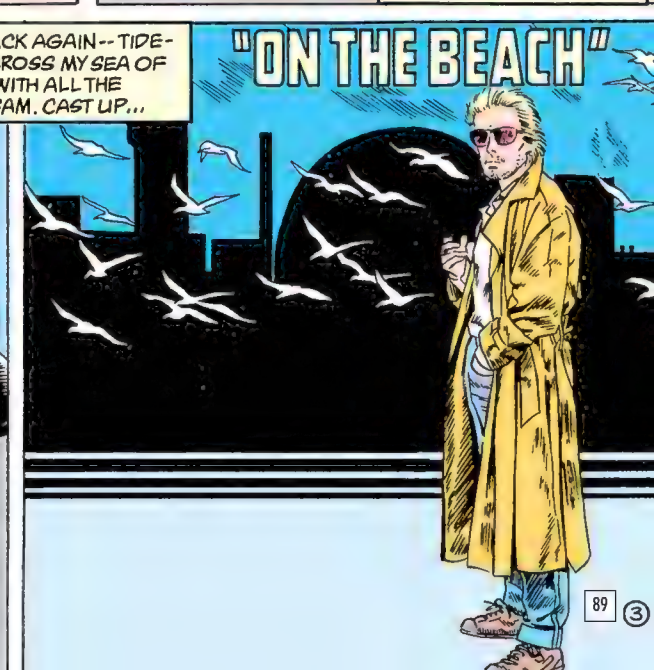


SAY NO  
TO NUCLEAR  
POWER.

RUBBISH!  
YOU'RE JUST  
SCARE-  
MONGERS!

SHOULDN'T BE  
ALLOWED--SWEARING  
AND FRIGHTENING  
CHILDREN!

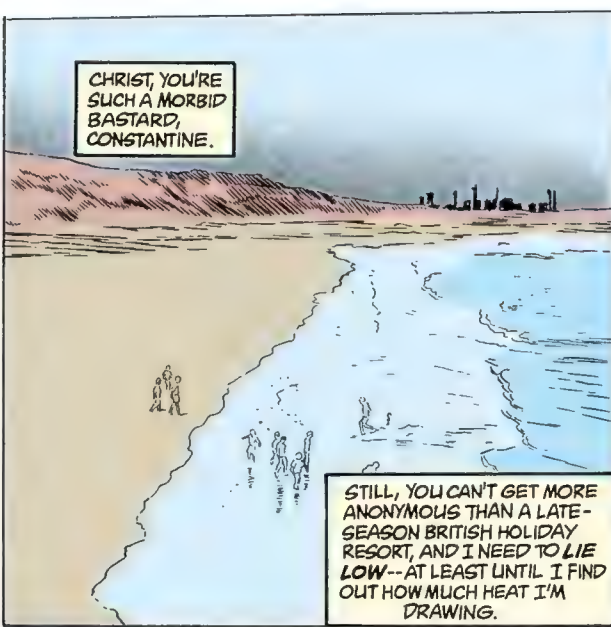
NOW I'M BACK AGAIN--TIDE-  
WASHED ACROSS MY SEA OF  
TROUBLES WITH ALL THE  
OTHER JETSAW. CAST UP..



"ON THE BEACH"

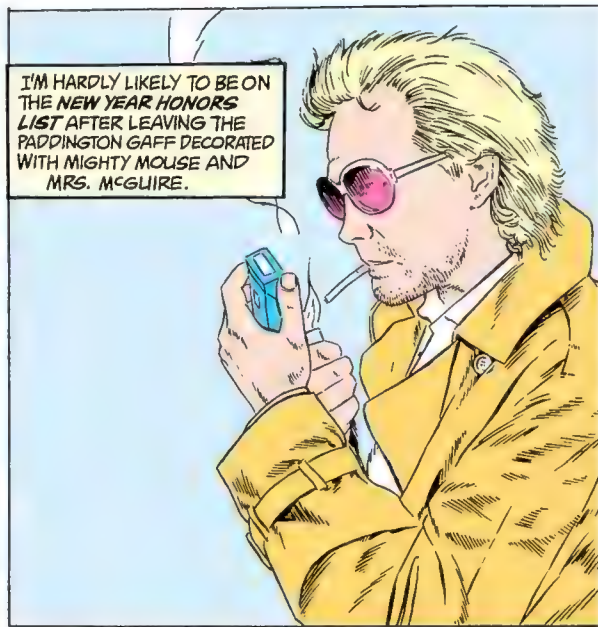


CHRIST, YOU'RE  
SUCH A MORBID  
BASTARD,  
CONSTANTINE.

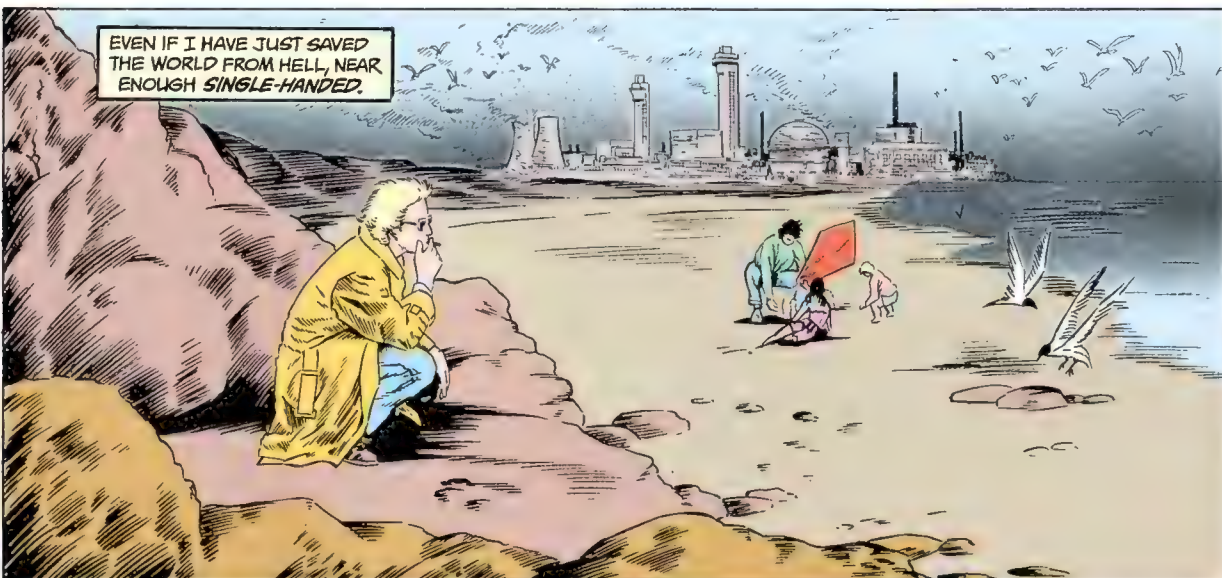


STILL, YOU CAN'T GET MORE  
ANONYMOUS THAN A LATE-  
SEASON BRITISH HOLIDAY  
RESORT, AND I NEED TO *LIE*  
*LOW*--AT LEAST UNTIL I FIND  
OUT HOW MUCH HEAT I'M  
DRAWING.

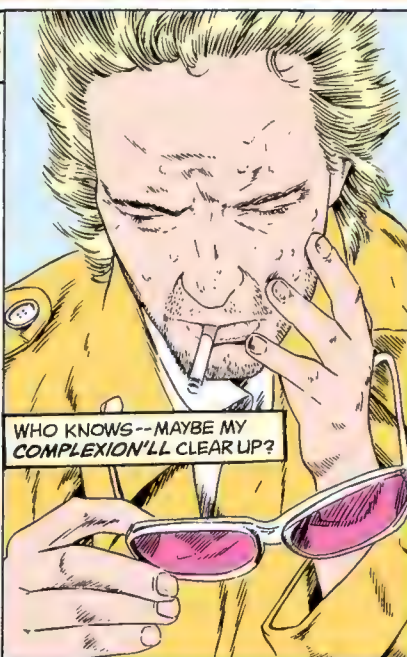
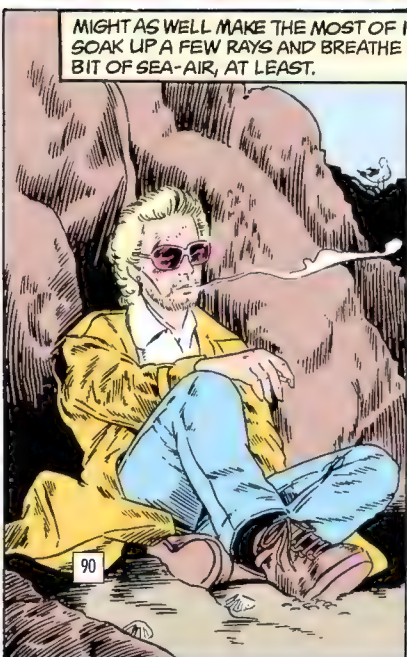
I'M HARDLY LIKELY TO BE ON  
THE *NEW YEAR HONORS*  
*LIST* AFTER LEAVING THE  
PADDINGTON GAFF DECORATED  
WITH MIGHTY MOUSE AND  
MRS. MCGUIRE.



EVEN IF I HAVE JUST SAVED  
THE WORLD FROM HELL, NEAR  
ENOUGH *SINGLE-HANDED*.

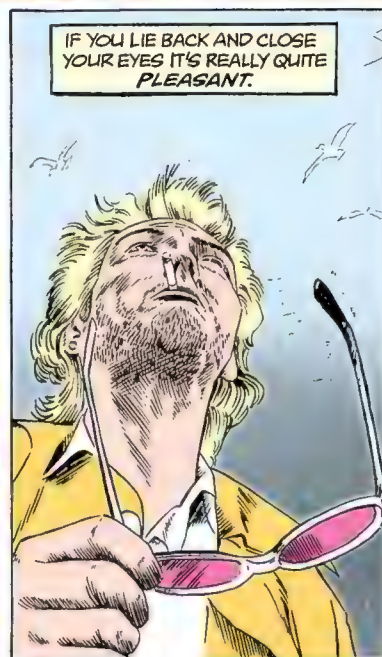


MIGHT AS WELL MAKE THE MOST OF IT.  
SOAK UP A FEW RAYS AND BREATHE A  
BIT OF SEA-AIR, AT LEAST.



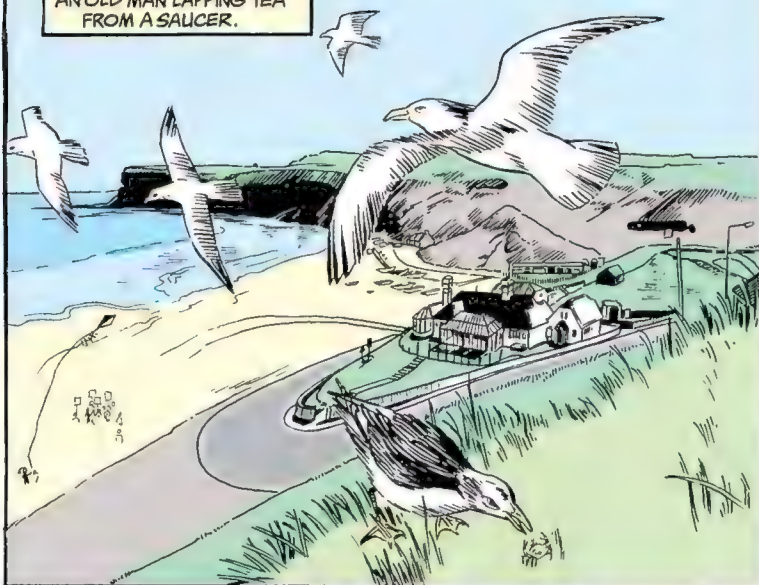
WHO KNOWS--MAYBE MY  
COMPLEXION'LL CLEAR UP?

IF YOU LIE BACK AND CLOSE  
YOUR EYES IT'S REALLY QUITE  
*PLEASANT*.





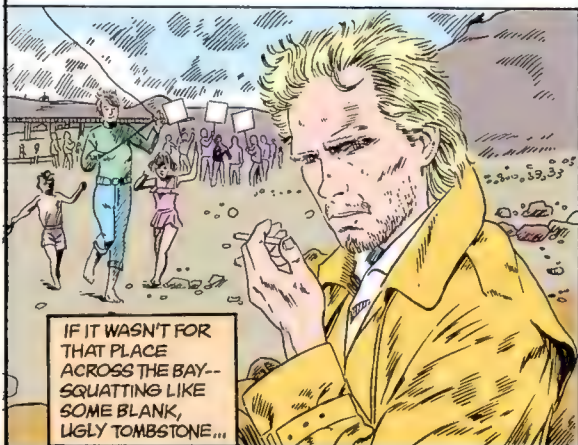
TOOTHLESS SEA SUCKING--  
AN OLD MAN LAPPING TEA  
FROM A SAUCER.



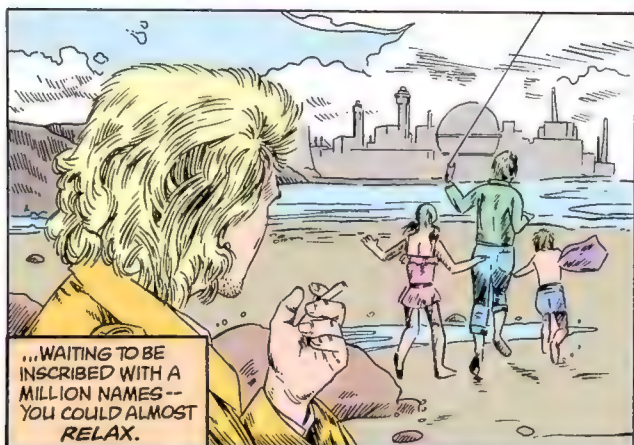
CHILDREN'S VOICES  
RIDING THE WIND--  
HIGH, DISTANT, KITES  
TUGGED THROUGH  
THE SKY.



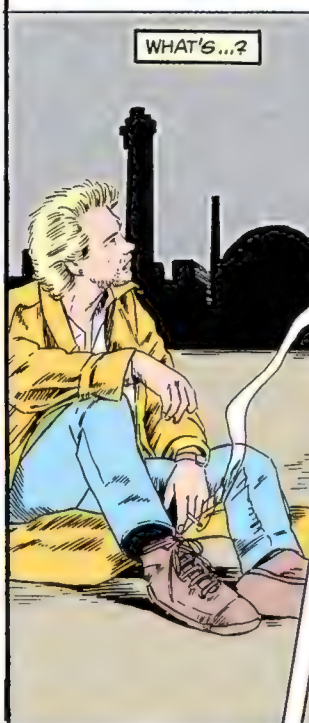
IF IT WASN'T FOR  
THAT PLACE  
ACROSS THE BAY--  
SQUATTING LIKE  
SOME BLANK,  
UGLY TOMBSTONE...



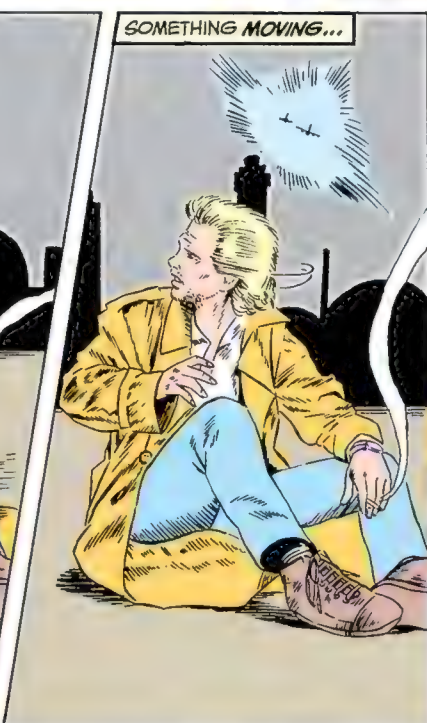
...WAITING TO BE  
INSCRIBED WITH A  
MILLION NAMES--  
YOU COULD ALMOST  
RELAX.



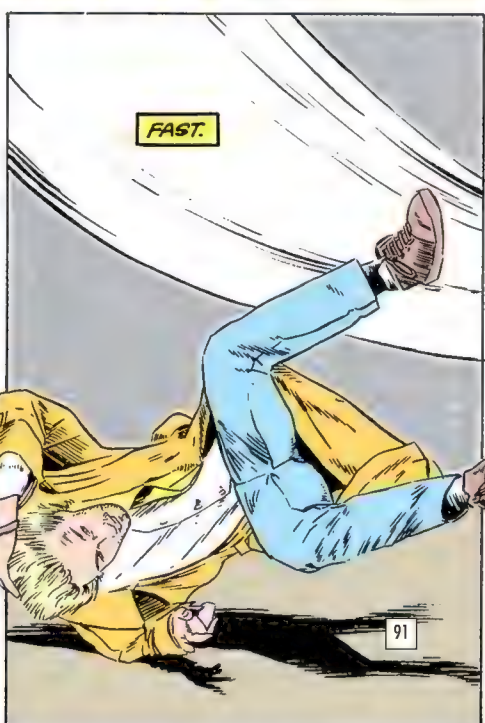
WHAT'S...?



SOMETHING MOVING...

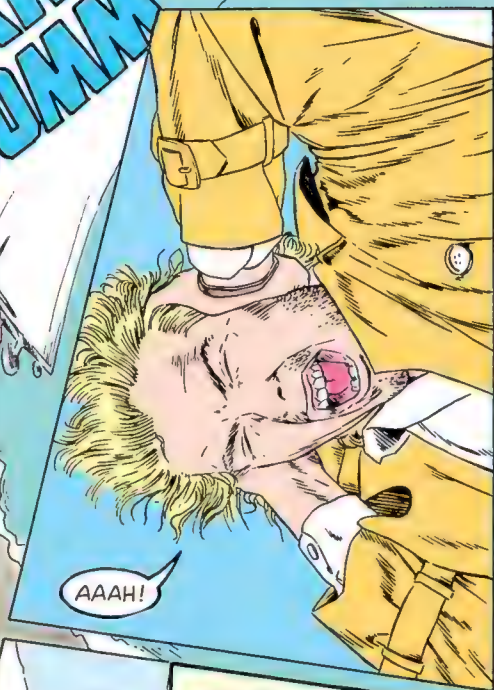


FAST.





VRRAAAKKK  
KKOONN



AAAH!

CRASH, YOU  
BASTARDS!

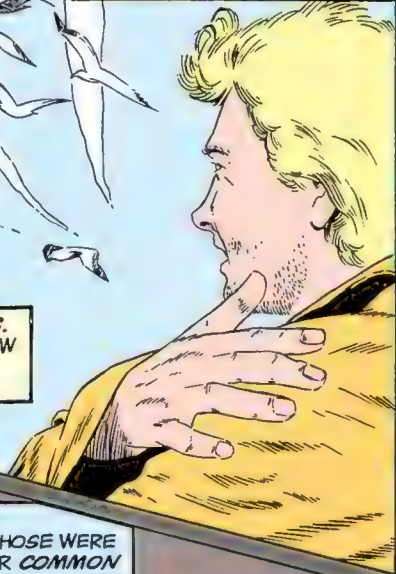


QUARR  
QUARR

AMAZING HOW  
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO KEEP THE  
PLANET CLEAN-- BUT WE CAN  
BUY TOYS FOR THE BOYS!

QUARR  
QUARK

BLOODY BIG KIDS.  
THEY SHOULD GROW  
UP AND GET  
GIRLFRIENDS.



LIKE ME. I HAD A  
GIRLFRIEND ONCE BUT  
I WAS CARELESS, I  
LOST HER--KILLED HER.

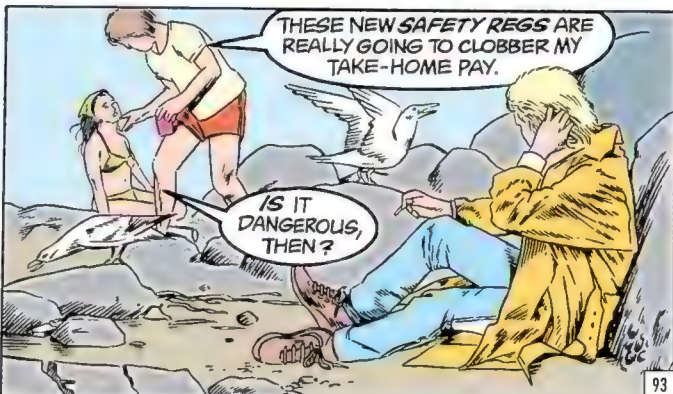
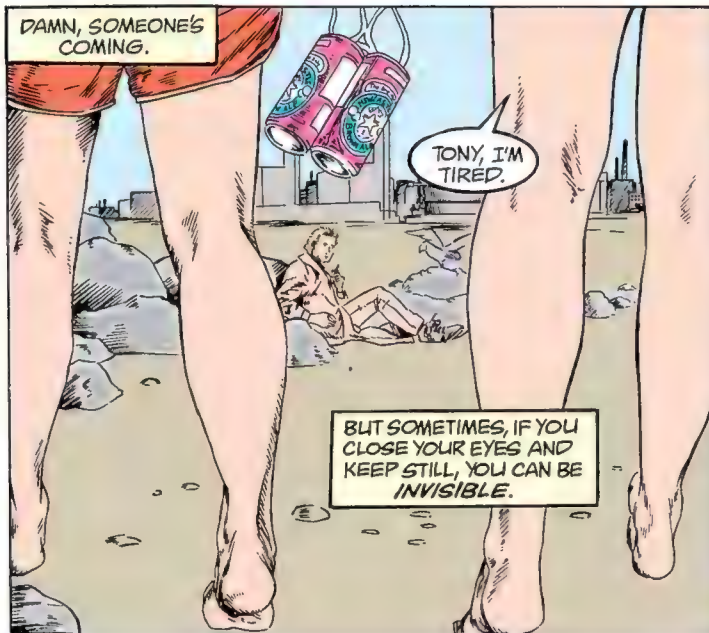
ONCE, I WOULD'VE  
KNOWN WHETHER THOSE WERE  
HERRING GULLS OR COMMON  
GULLS. PEOPLE SHOULD LEARN  
THE NAMES OF THINGS. THEY'RE  
MORE IMPORTANT IF YOU KNOW  
WHAT THEY'RE CALLED--

CHANGE  
THE SUBJECT,  
JOHN.



-- HARDER TO FORGET.



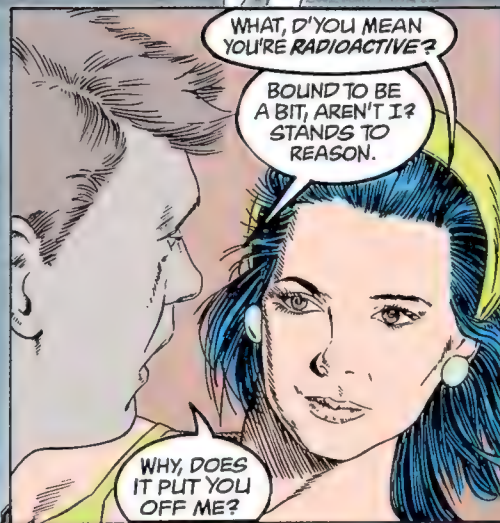






NAH, NOT IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE **DOING**. I'VE BEEN EXPOSED OVER THE MAX **DOZENS** OF TIMES--

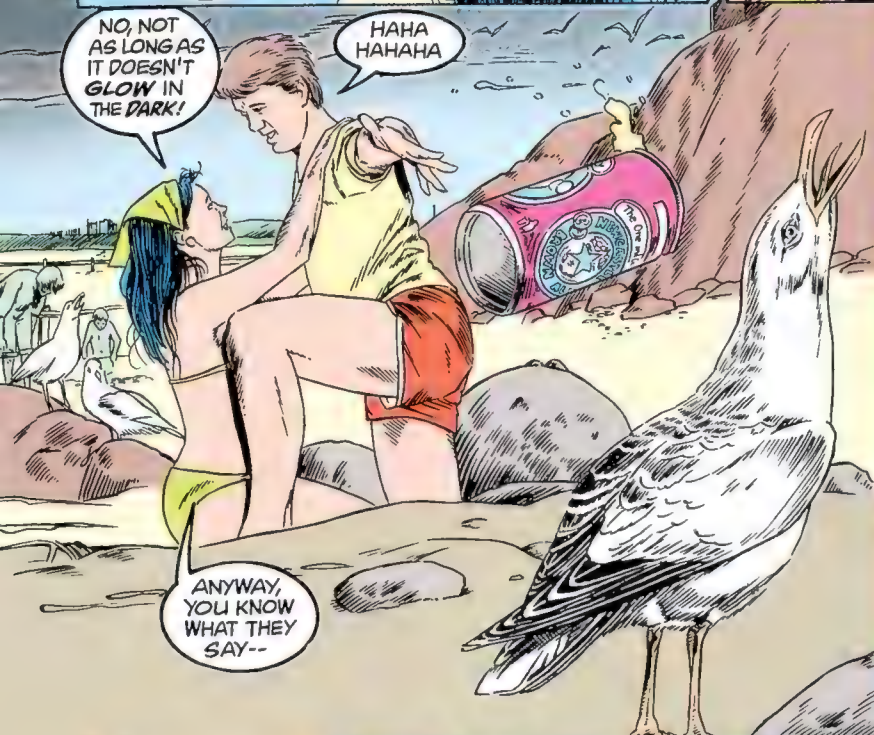
--AND I'M NOT DEAD YET, AM I?



WHAT, D'YOU MEAN YOU'RE **RADIOACTIVE**?

BOUND TO BE A BIT, AREN'T I? STANDS TO REASON.

WHY, DOES IT PUT YOU OFF ME?



NO, NOT AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T **GLOW** IN THE DARK!

HABA  
HAAAA

ANYWAY, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY--



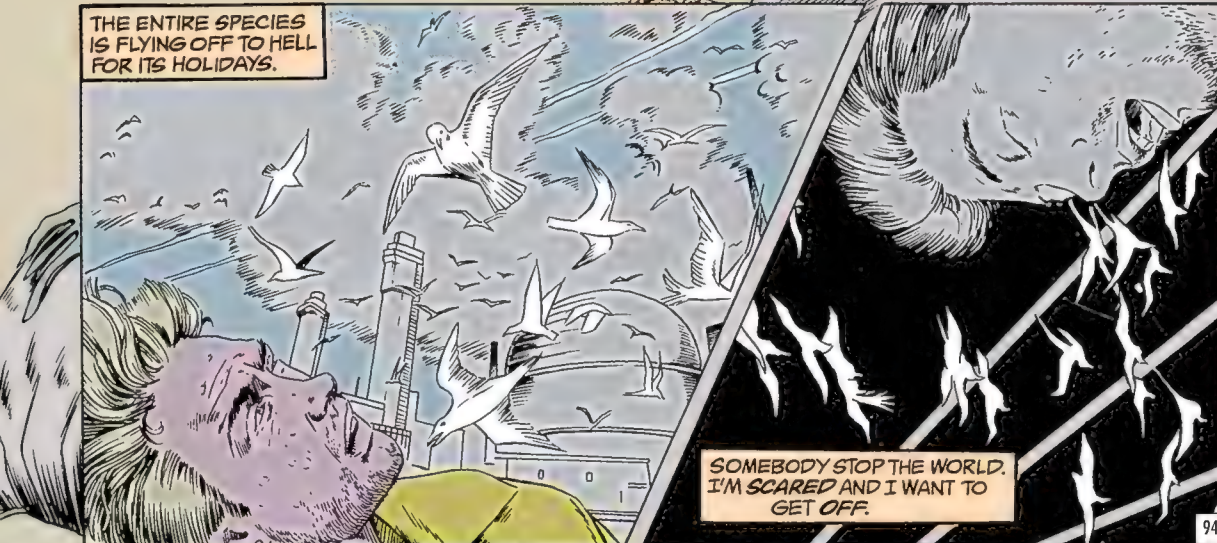
SOME LIKE IT **HOT**.

JESUS, WE'RE ALL **BLOODY DOOMED**, AREN'T WE?

QUARK!

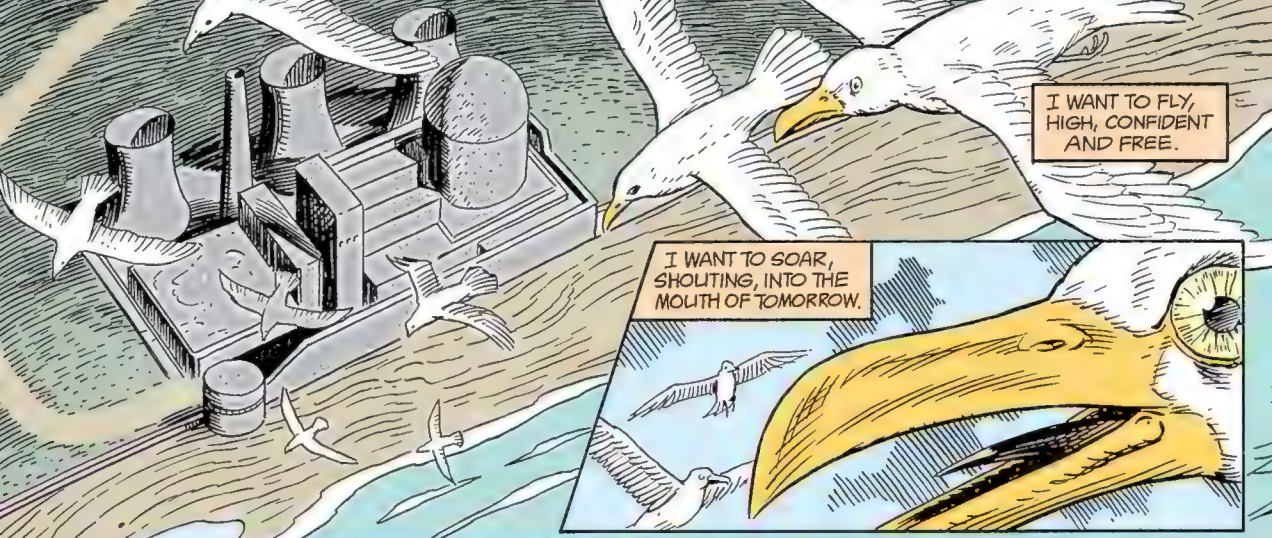
DONK!

THE ENTIRE SPECIES IS FLYING OFF TO HELL FOR ITS HOLIDAYS.



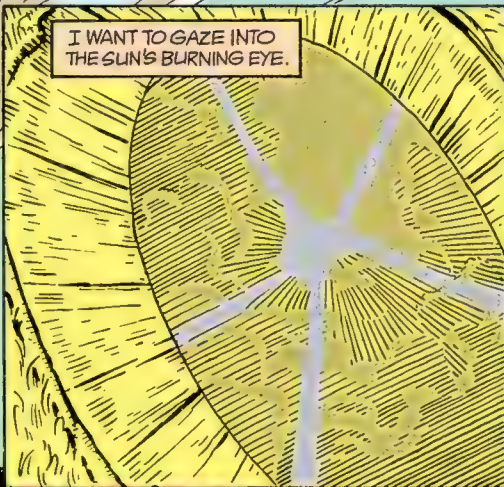
SOMEBODY STOP THE WORLD. I'M SCARED AND I WANT TO GET OFF.



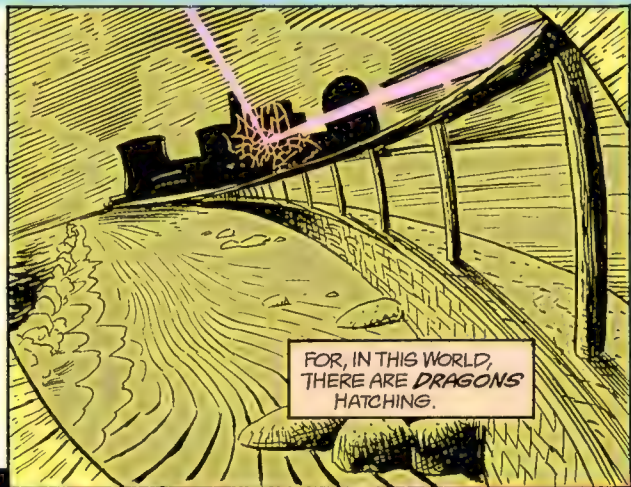


I WANT TO FLY,  
HIGH, CONFIDENT  
AND FREE.

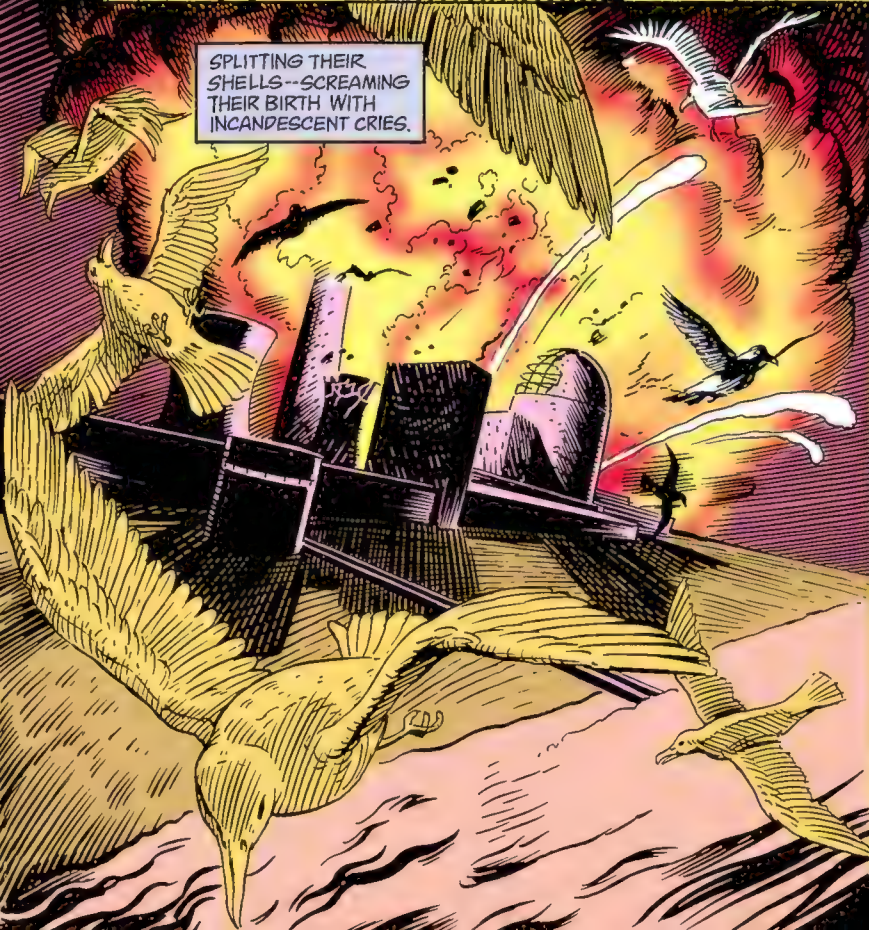
I WANT TO SOAR,  
SHOUTING, INTO THE  
MOUTH OF TOMORROW.



I WANT TO GAZE INTO  
THE SUN'S BURNING EYE.

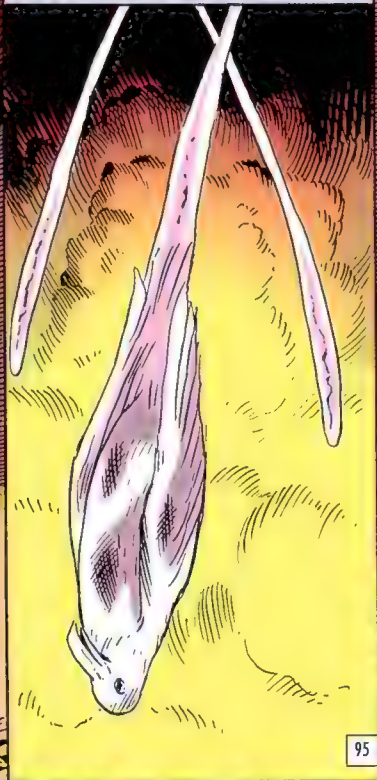


FOR, IN THIS WORLD,  
THERE ARE *DRAGONS*  
HATCHING.



SPLITTING THEIR  
SHELLS--SCREAMING  
THEIR BIRTH WITH  
INCANDESCENT CRIES.

FIRE-TONGUES SLASHING LIKE A  
RAZOR-FIGHT--THEY LICK THE WORLD  
TO CINDERS--





HURLING OUR DREAMS --  
BROKEN, BURNED AND  
BLOODY -- DOWN TO THE  
TREMBLING EARTH.

SCREAMING --

CRASH, YOU  
BASTARDS!

CRASH!

FEAR-FROZEN WORDLESS, WE  
STAND NUMB AS THE **NEW**  
**BEAST** STRETCHES ITS WINGS,  
LIKE CURTAINS, OVER THE SKY --

--THE SUN --

--THE LIGHT.

SMOTHERED IN THE  
CHILL OF NIGHT, WE  
SEEK OUT EACH  
OTHERS' WARMTH.

I'VE STAYED OUT TOO LATE AND SEEN  
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE TIDE TURNS.  
NOW I WANT TO RIN FOR HOME -- TO  
GALLOP MADLY INTO THE PAST.

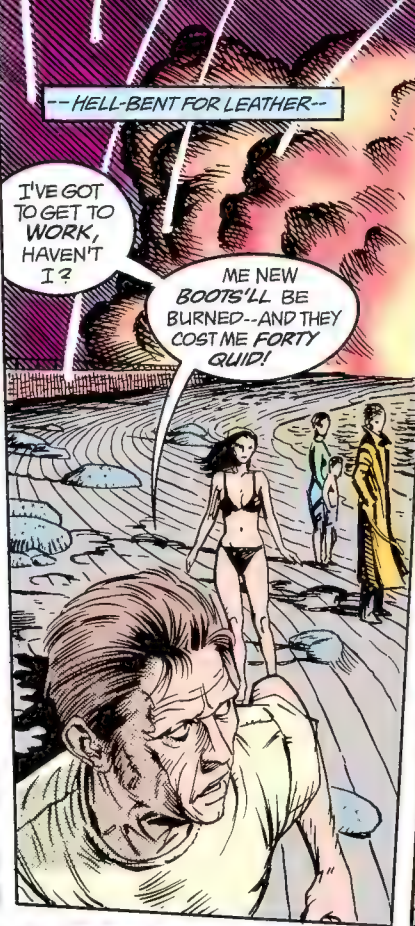
I WANT TO STUFF MYSELF  
WITH BEANS-ON-TOAST --  
TO KEEP THOSE DOGIES  
MOVING.





THROUGH RAIN, WIND  
AND WEATHER--

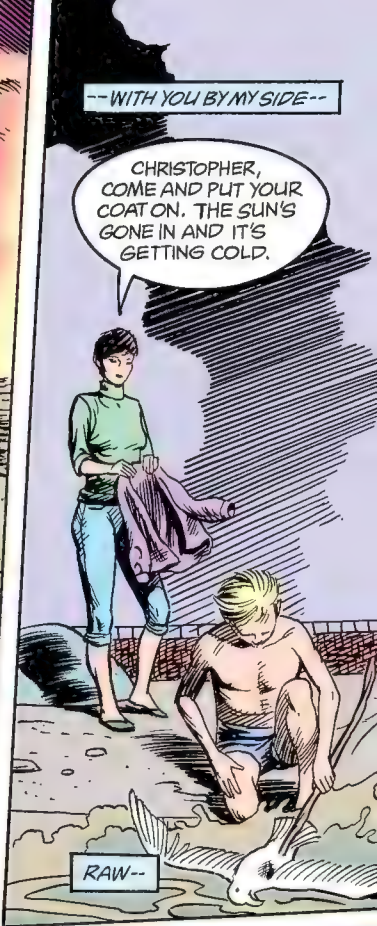
TONY--  
WHERE ARE  
YOU GOING?



--HELL-BENT FOR LEATHER--

I'VE GOT  
TO GET TO  
WORK,  
HAVEN'T  
I?

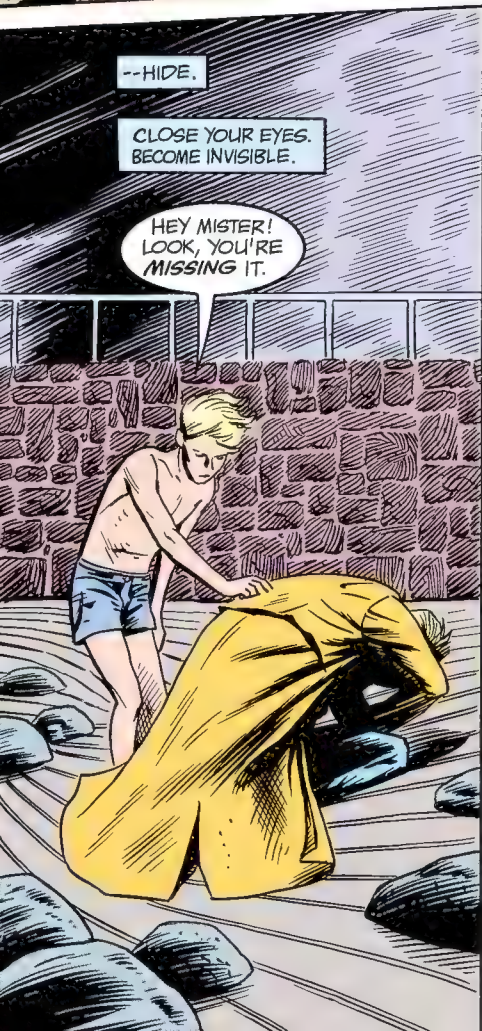
ME NEW  
BOOTS'LL BE  
BURNED--AND THEY  
COST ME FORTY  
QUID!



--WITH YOU BY MY SIDE--

CHRISTOPHER,  
COME AND PUT YOUR  
COAT ON. THE SUN'S  
GONE IN AND IT'S  
GETTING COLD.

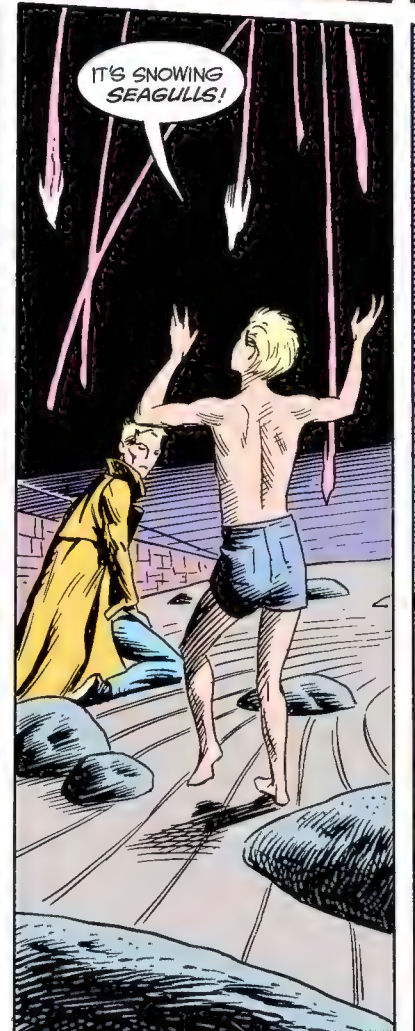
RAW--



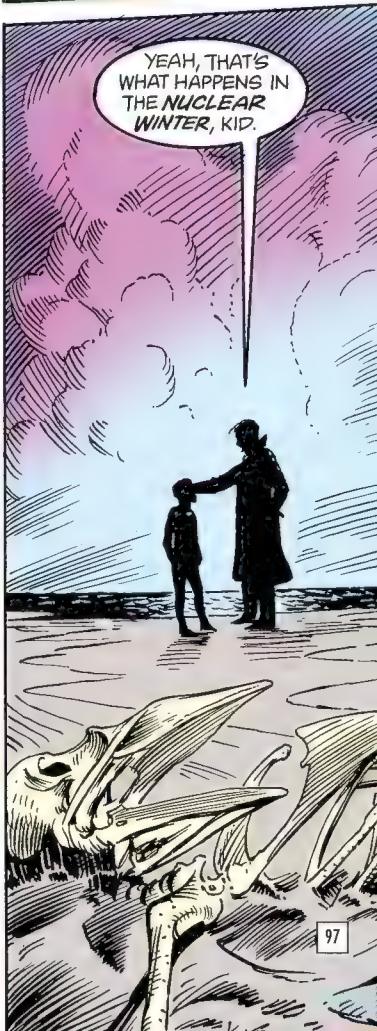
--HIDE.

CLOSE YOUR EYES.  
BECOME INVISIBLE.

HEY MISTER!  
LOOK, YOU'RE  
MISSING IT.

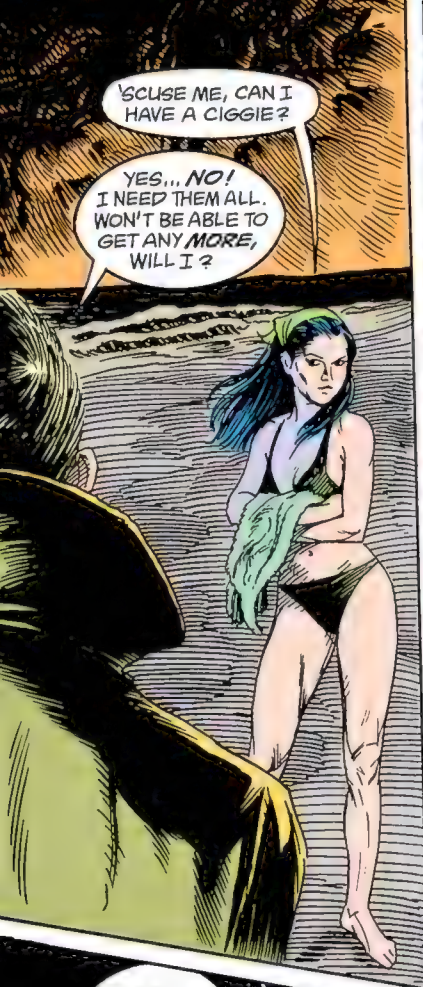


IT'S SNOWING  
SEAGULLS!



YEAH, THAT'S  
WHAT HAPPENS IN  
THE NUCLEAR  
WINTER, KID.





SCUSE ME, CAN I HAVE A CIGGIE?

YES... NO! I NEED THEM ALL. WON'T BE ABLE TO GET ANY MORE, WILL I?



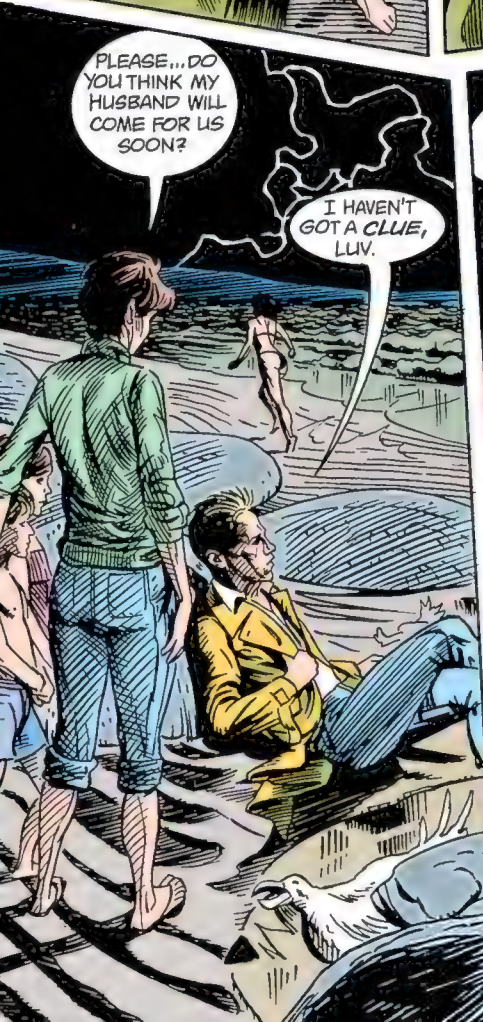
MEAN BASTARD! WAIT 'TIL MY BOYFRIEND GETS BACK WITH HIS BOOTS. HE'LL GIVE YOU A RIGHT KICKING.

HAH! HE WON'T GET NEAR ME.



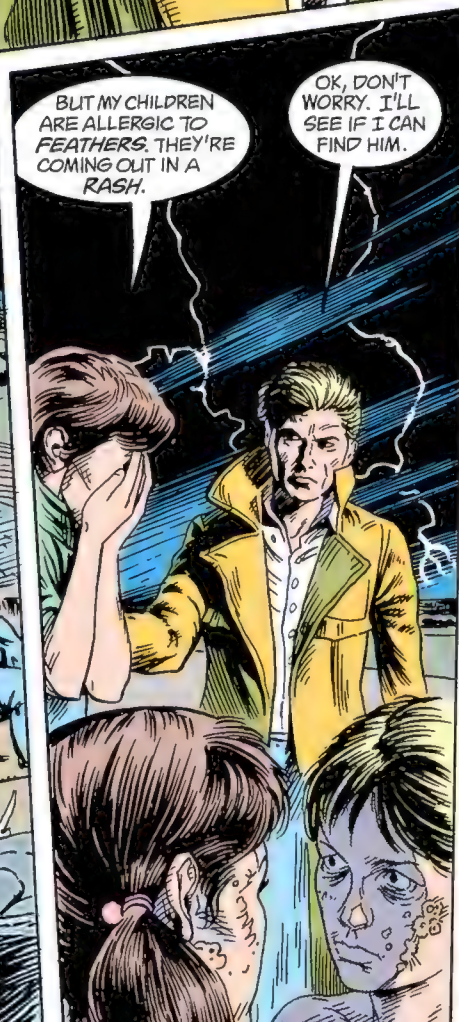
WHY NOT?

I'LL SEE HIM COMING, WON'T I? HE'LL BE GLOWING IN THE DARK. HAHA HAAAA



PLEASE... DO YOU THINK MY HUSBAND WILL COME FOR US SOON?

I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE, LUV.



BUT MY CHILDREN ARE ALLERGIC TO FEATHERS. THEY'RE COMING OUT IN A RASH.

OK, DON'T WORRY. I'LL SEE IF I CAN FIND HIM.



A HUNDRED-MILLION FLUTTERING CORPSES, WIND-PILED IN DRIFTS, ROLL, SHIFTING--

SOFTLY CRUNCHING UNDERFOOT.



SLIP-SLIDING-- WET-  
SMEARED WITH BIRD  
BLOOD AND EXCREMENT.

SCRATCHED BY DEAD BEAKS  
AND BROKEN, HOLLOW BONES--

CLAWING, TOPPLING,  
TUMBLING AMONGST  
AN AVINE AVALANCHE--

IT TAKES FOREVER--

--TO FIND THE WHOLE  
WORLD STIFLED, CHOKED  
UNDER ITS RANK DUVET--

--SMOTHERED BY  
SWEATY, FEATHERED  
FEAR.

HEY YOU!  
CLEAR OFF. WE  
DON'T WANT TO SEE  
YOU 'ROUND  
HERE.

'CAUSE YOU'RE  
ALL FOWLED UP--  
AND YOU'LL SCARE  
THE CHILDREN!

HUH?  
WHY  
NOT?

KIK  
KIKKIKIKIKIKIKIKIKIKIK



TIRED--A LONG  
TIME WALKING.

BRITTLE BONE CRUNCHING--  
LOOSE TEETH RATTLING IN  
MY SKULL--

IS IT *BLOOD*--  
THAT BITTER TASTE?

KRONCH  
KRONCH  
KRONCH

HULLO.

I'M SORRY.  
I COULDN'T  
FIND HIM.

OH WELL...THANKS  
ANYWAY. IT DOESN'T  
MATTER.

C'MON  
CHILDREN.

WHAT ARE  
YOU GOING  
TO DO?

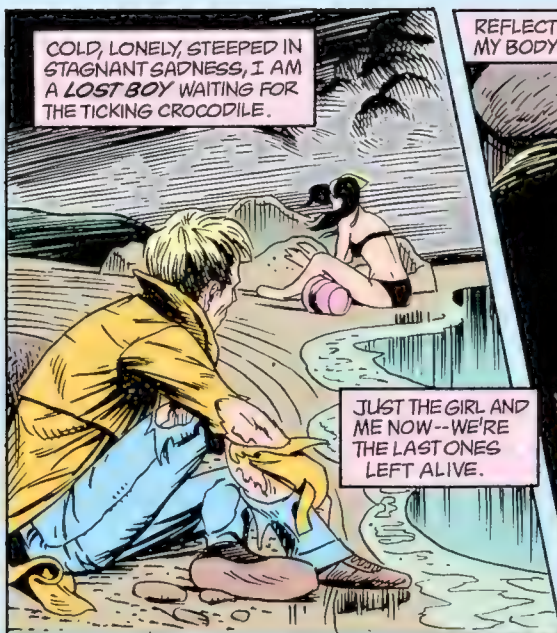
I'VE  
COME TO A  
DECISION.

MAKE A  
WISH.

THE ONLY CHANCE WE  
HAVE FOR SURVIVAL IS  
EVOLUTION OF THE  
SPECIES.

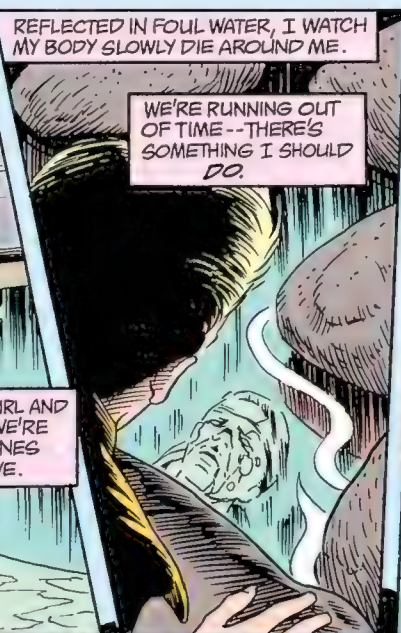
I'M TAKING  
MY CHILDREN BACK  
TO THE SEA. I'M GOING  
TO MAKE THEM GROW  
GILLS.





COLD, LONELY, STEEPED IN STAGNANT SADNESS, I AM A LOST BOY WAITING FOR THE TICKING CROCODILE.

JUST THE GIRL AND ME NOW--WE'RE THE LAST ONES LEFT ALIVE.

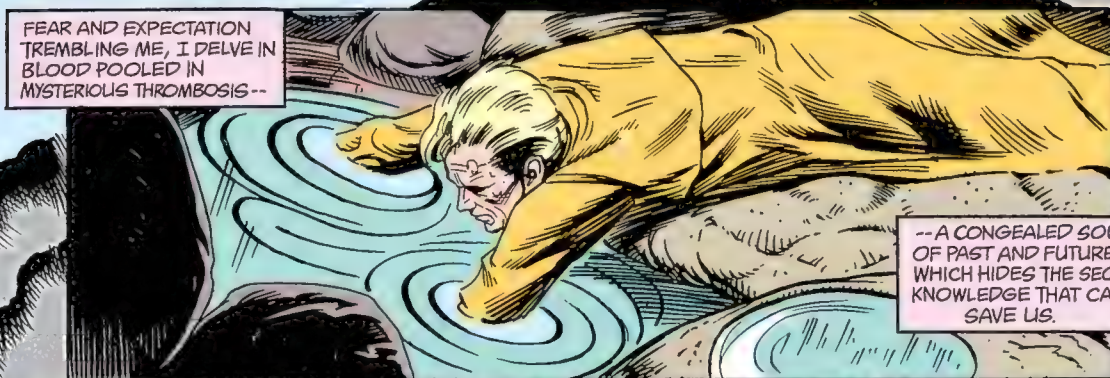


REFLECTED IN FOUL WATER, I WATCH MY BODY SLOWLY DIE AROUND ME.

WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME--THERE'S SOMETHING I SHOULD DO.

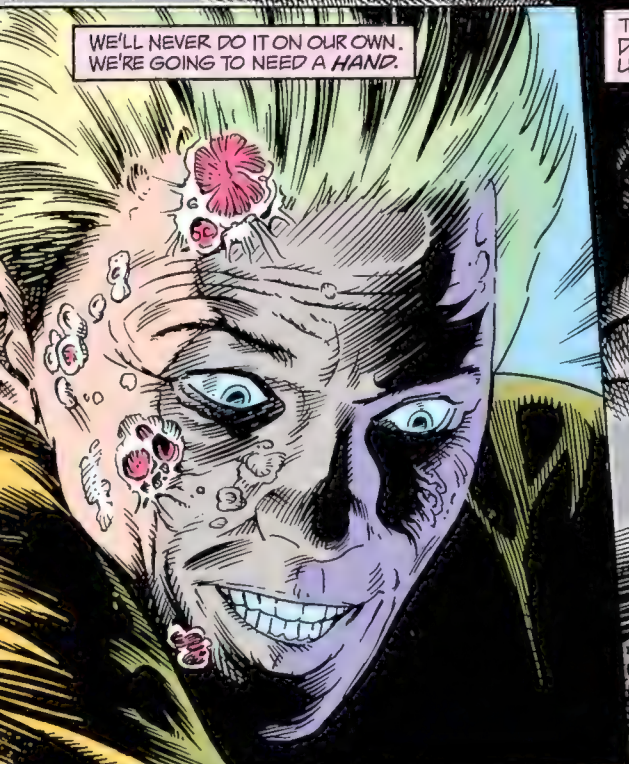


GROW UP, PETER PAN--GET A GIRLFRIEND.



FEAR AND EXPECTATION TREMBLING ME, I DELVE IN BLOOD POOLED IN MYSTERIOUS THROMBOSIS--

--A CONGEALED SOUP OF PAST AND FUTURE WHICH HIDES THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN SAVE US.



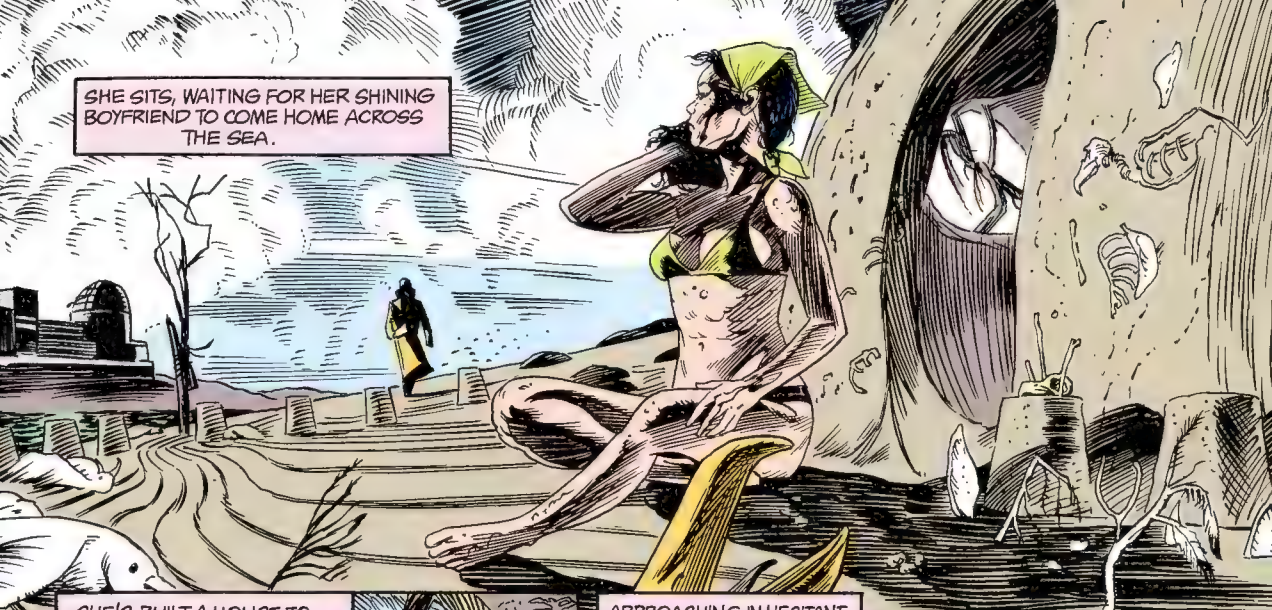
WE'LL NEVER DO IT ON OUR OWN. WE'RE GOING TO NEED A HAND.



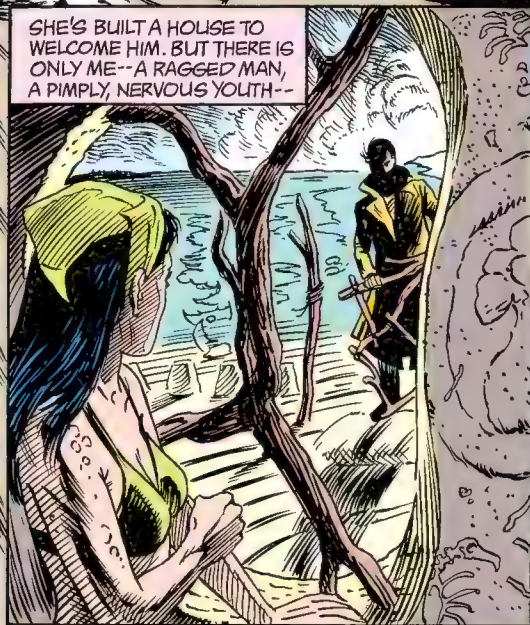
TRIUMPH, EXCITEMENT--MY DABBING FINGERS TRAWL UP A THRILLING MEAT OF LIFE.



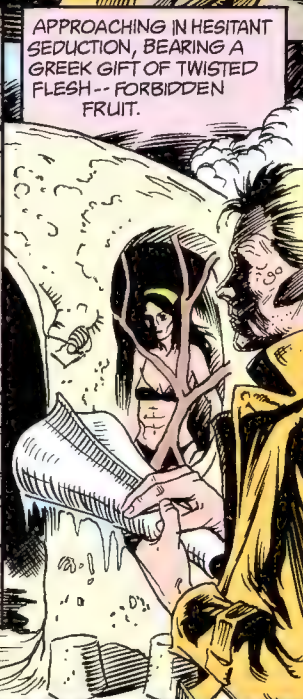
SHE SITS, WAITING FOR HER SHINING  
BOYFRIEND TO COME HOME ACROSS  
THE SEA.



SHE'S BUILT A HOUSE TO  
WELCOME HIM. BUT THERE IS  
ONLY ME-- A RAGGED MAN,  
A PIMPLY, NERVOUS YOUTH--



APPROACHING IN HESITANT  
SEDUCTION, BEARING A  
GREEK GIFT OF TWISTED  
FLESH-- FORBIDDEN  
FRUIT.



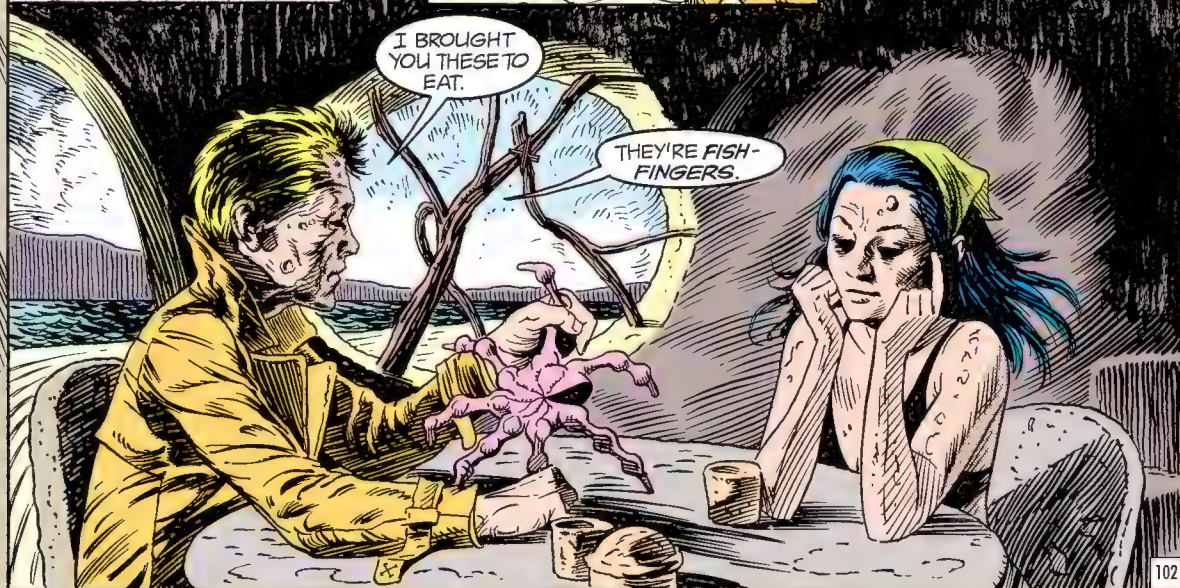
NEGOTIATIONS ARE BRIEF.

WE HAVE  
NO CHOICE  
BUT TO  
AGREE.

HELLO.



TO EXCHANGE CONTRACTS  
ENFORCED BY DESPERATE D.N.A.



I BROUGHT  
YOU THESE TO  
EAT.

THEY'RE FISH-  
FINGERS.

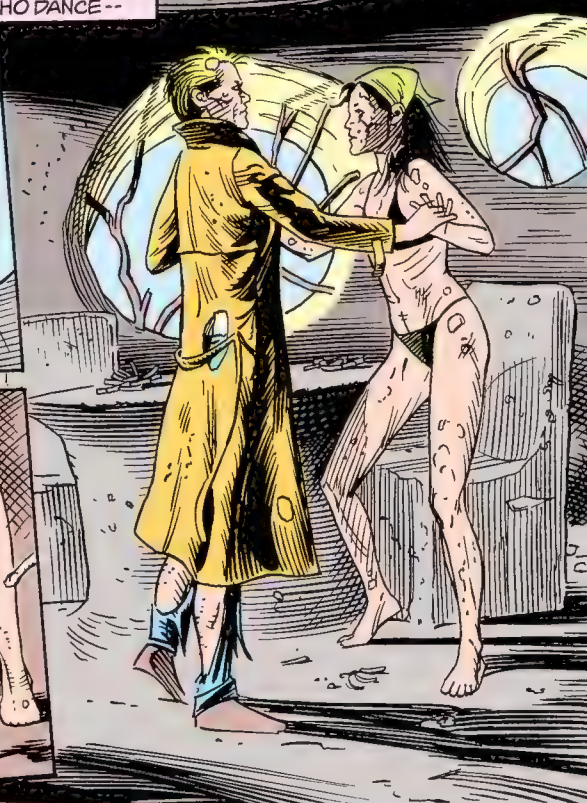
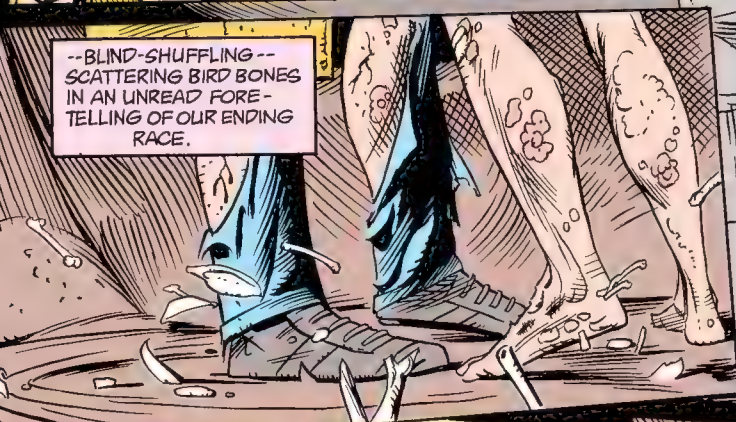


WE SHARE THE HAND  
OF FRIENDSHIP.

THEN WE DANCE A  
STUMBLING, CLUMSY  
BOHO DANCE--

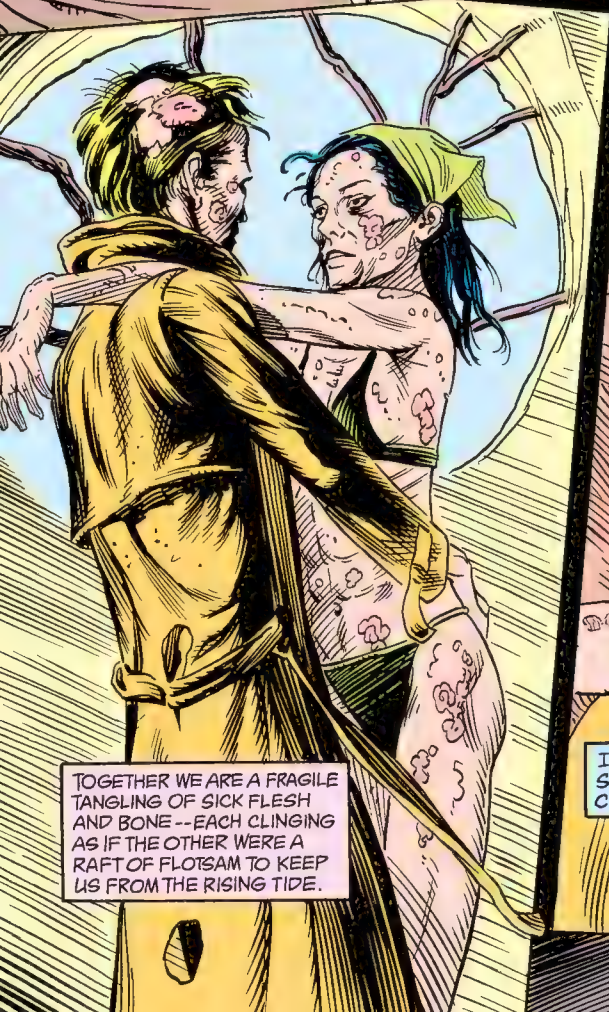


--BLIND-SHUFFLING--  
SCATTERING BIRD BONES  
IN AN UNREAD FORE-  
TELLING OF OUR ENDING  
RACE.



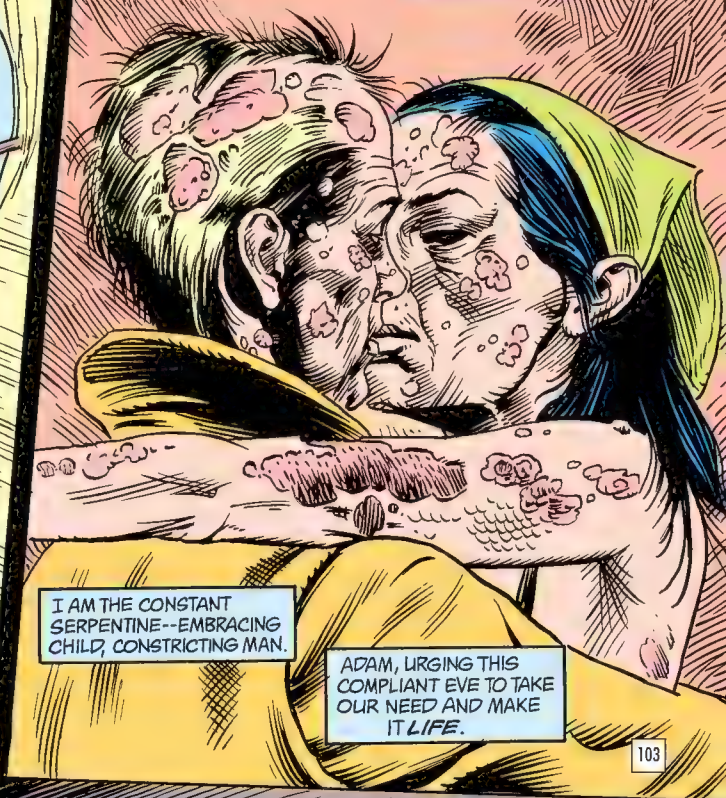
THERE IS AN EMPTINESS  
OF BRUISING, SOBBING  
FLESH--

A BODY-SOFTNESS  
WETLY SMOTHERING A  
CALCIUM CRUMBLING OF  
TEETH.



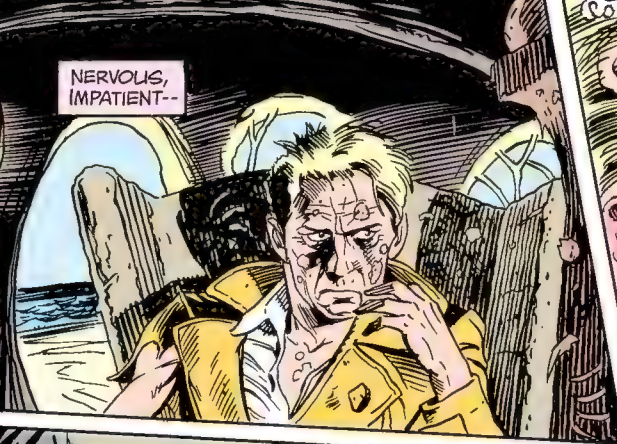
TOGETHER WE ARE A FRAGILE  
TANGLING OF SICK FLESH  
AND BONE--EACH CLINGING  
AS IF THE OTHER WERE A  
RAFT OF FLOTSAM TO KEEP  
US FROM THE RISING TIDE.

I AM THE CONSTANT  
SERPENTINE--EMBRACING  
CHILD, CONSTRICTING MAN.



ADAM, URGING THIS  
COMPLIANT EVE TO TAKE  
OUR NEED AND MAKE  
IT LIFE.

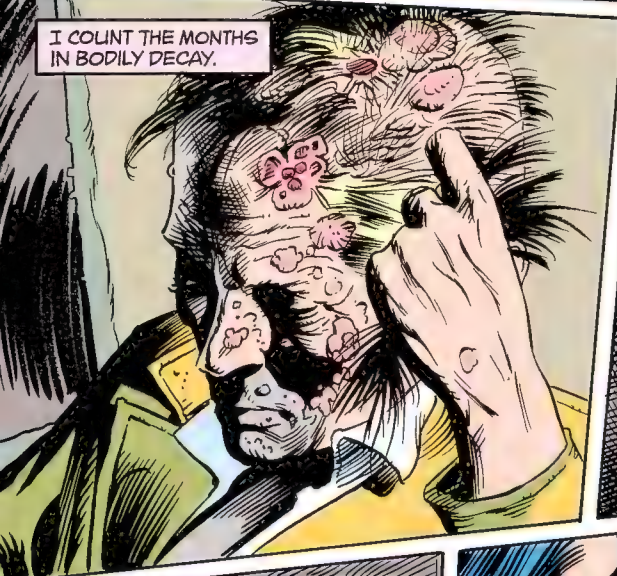




NERVOUS,  
IMPATIENT--



LIVING A RADIOACTIVE  
HALF-LIFE--



I COUNT THE MONTHS  
IN BODILY DECAY.



SHE'S FADING FASTER--  
FEEDING THE HOPE FOR  
FUTURE THAT HER  
WASTING BODY GROWS.



HER BELLY SWELLING UNDER  
THE SLOW HEAT OF  
FASCINATION AS OUR  
EXPERIMENT FOMENTS  
WITHIN.



EVOLUTION IS  
OUR SPECIES'  
ONLY HOPE.



WILL IT BE  
ALL RIGHT?  
HOW DOES IT  
FEEL?

TOUCH  
IT AND  
SEE.



SOMETIMES IT  
MOVES-- AND YOU  
CAN FEEL ITS  
HEADS.



HEADS?

YEAH, THAT'S COOL. WHY  
NOT? **TWO** HEADS'VE  
GOT TO BE BETTER THAN  
**ONE**.



THIS IS THE TIME OF TRUTH -- ANOTHER TURNING TIDE.

THIS IS THE FUTURE COME TO CLAIM THE LEGACY WE'VE LEFT.

I FISH DEEP IN THAT FAMILIAR POOL OF MYSTERY--EXPECTANT FINGERS FINDING THE VIBRANT THRILL OF HEARTBEAT THAT WILL CARRY OUR RHYTHMS ON.

I DRAW IT OUT, KICKING, INTO THIS POISONED WORLD.

Ooooooh.

HER LIFE COMES WITH IT.

HORROR, BEAUTY, WONDER, TWITCHING IN MY FEARFUL HANDS.

I GATHER IT, NURTURE IT--PROTECT MY CHILD.

BUT I AM WEAK--AND IT IS HEAVY, LITHE AND **STRONG**.

SLICK FLUID SLITHERING--ELUSIVE HOPE SPRING ETERNAL FROM MY ANXIOUS GRIP--

I CAN'T HOLD IT!



SLAP STICK.

SORE, RAW, HIDE FLIP-FLOPPING  
THROUGH COARSE, ABRASIVE  
GRIT--SHARP- STABBING  
SHARDS OF BONE.

HELPLESS, UNBEARABLY  
VULNERABLE AND SOFT--LIKE A  
PEELED TURTLE--IT HEADS FOR  
THE BROODING SAFETY OF THE  
SEA TO BIDE ITS TIME AND START  
AGAIN.

MY PROUD PARENTAL  
HEART GOES WITH IT,  
IN EXCITED RECOGNITION  
OF THAT INSTINCT FOR  
SURVIVAL.

YEAH...GIT  
'EM UP. MOVE  
'EM OUT!

GO ON Y'  
LITTLE CRITTUR--  
GALLOP!

KEEP  
MOVING!  
DON'T LOOK  
BACK--

GO, BABY!  
DON'T LET THE  
SIDE DOWN.

BUT NATURE--  
CAT-CRUEL--  
REVEALS HER  
UNFORGIVING  
CLAWS.

ALL THE  
MONEY'S  
RIDING  
ON YOU.

KLIK

KLACK

KLIK

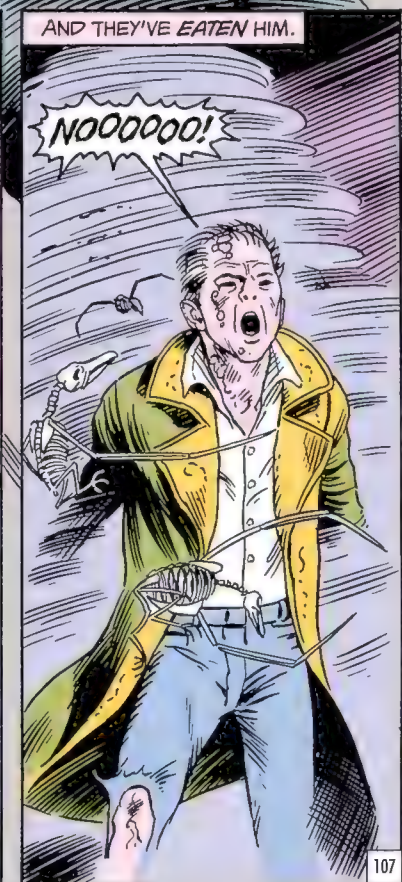
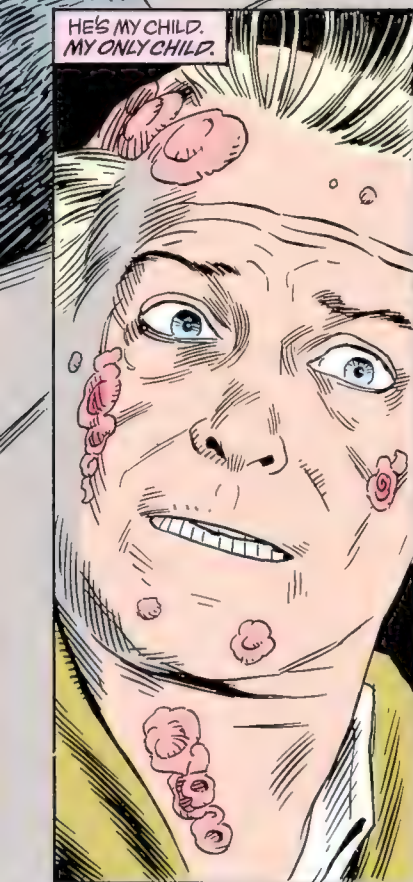
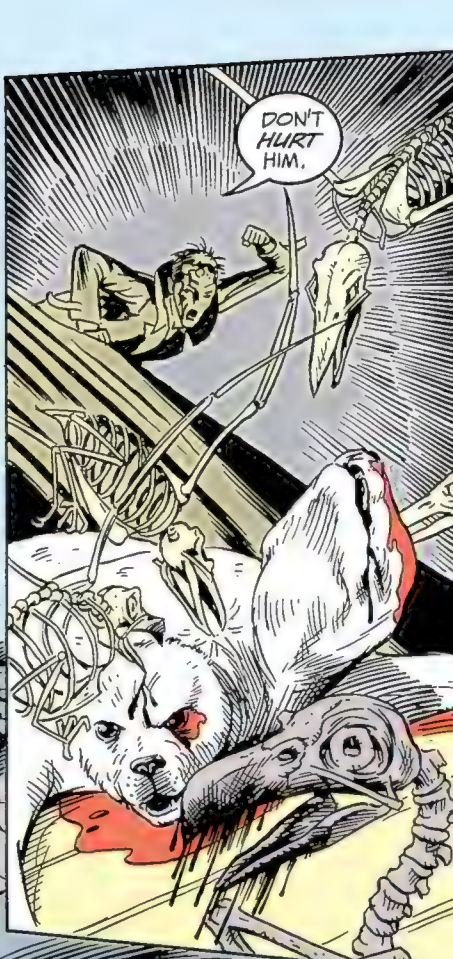
KLICKETY

KLIK

KLIK

KLIK







ALONE--  
UNUTTERABLY  
ALONE.

DRIVEN BY  
IMPOTENT,  
USELESS  
RAGE--

INTO COLD,  
RATTLING--  
RIPPING,  
TEARING  
TERROR.

TOO LATE NOW--A  
CENTURY TOO LATE TO  
PUT THINGS RIGHT.

NEW WAVES ARE BREAKING  
AND, WHEN THE TIDE TURNS,  
THE BIRDS FEED WHERE THE  
SEA AND SAND COLLIDE--

PICKING THE FLESH  
FROM DEAD,  
CORRUPTED THINGS.

REDUCING TO CLEAN BONE,  
THAT LIFE WHICH FAILS THE  
COURSE.

I'M THE LAST ONE ON  
THE BEACH. THE SUN'S  
GONE IN NOW-- IT'S  
GETTING COLD.

I SHOULD BE  
HOME IN BED.

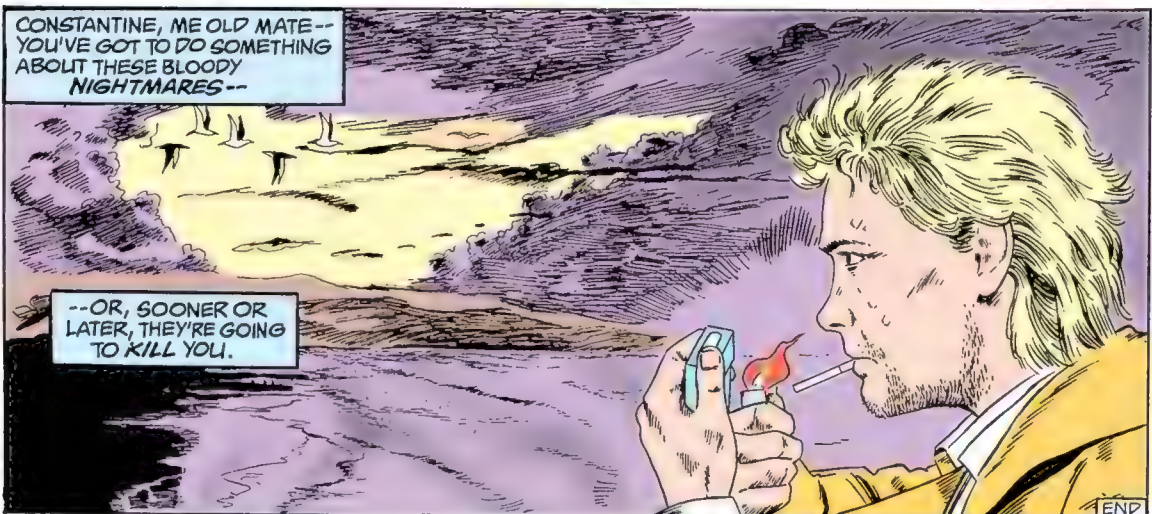
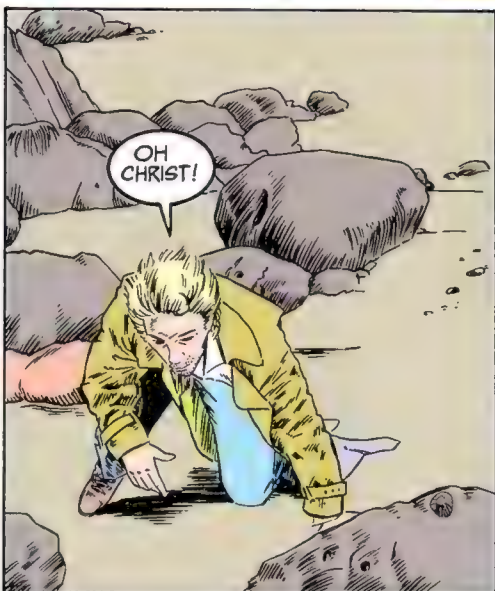
NO WORDS CAN EVER  
EXPRESS HOW BAD IT  
FEELS TO LOSE THE  
HUMAN RACE.

COLLAPSING--

--SLOWLY--

--INTO  
EXTINCTION.











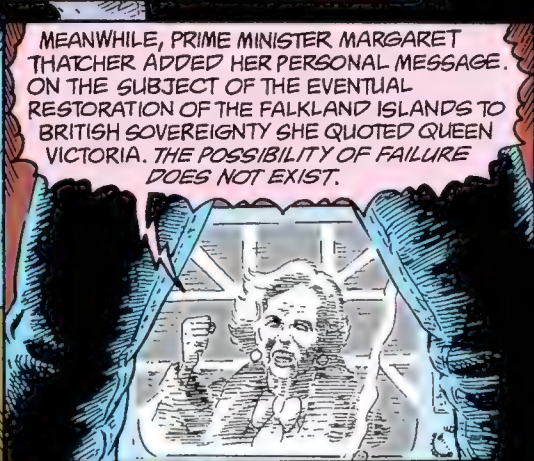
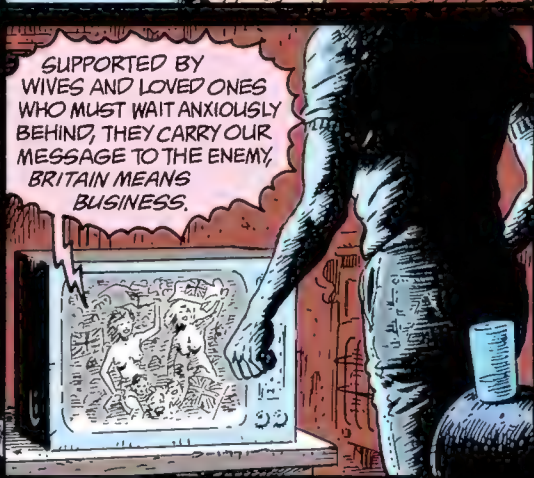
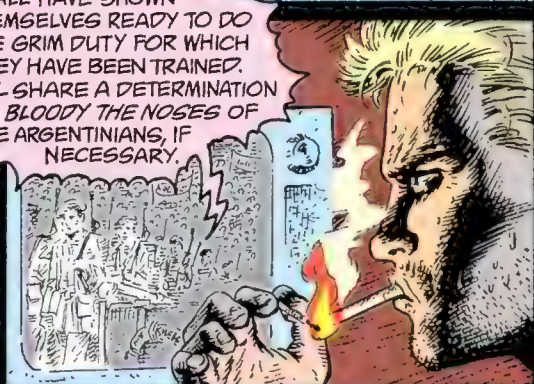
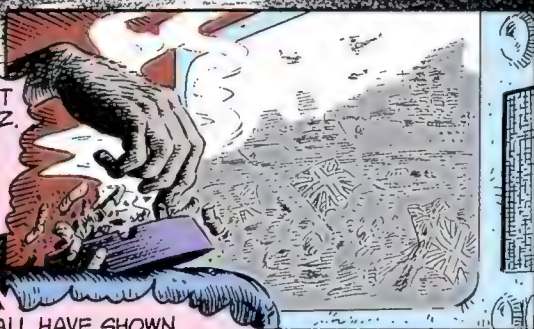
IN A FERVOR OF PATRIOTIC  
FLAG-WAVING AND MILITARY  
MUSIC, PORTSMOUTH TODAY  
BID A FOND FAREWELL TO  
THE ROYAL NAVY TASKFORCE  
AS IT SET SAIL FOR THE  
FALKLAND ISLANDS.

THIS IS BRITAIN'S BIGGEST  
NAVAL DISPLAY SINCE SUEZ.  
IT INCLUDES FRIGATES,  
DESTROYERS, SUBMARINES  
AND AIRCRAFT-CARRIERS,  
ON BOARD WHICH ARE MEN  
OF THE ROYAL MARINES,  
PARATROOPERS AND  
SPECIAL SERVICES.

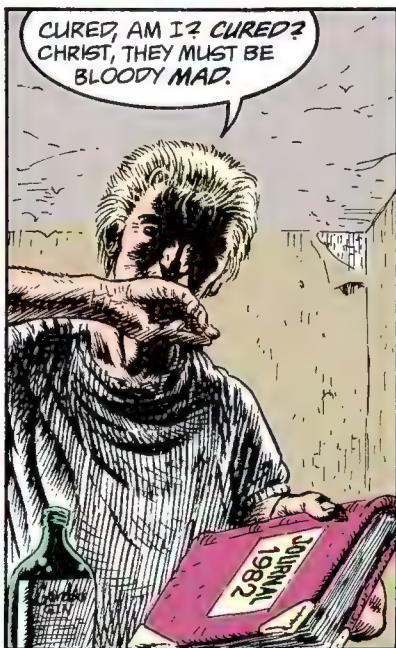
ALL HAVE SHOWN  
THEMSELVES READY TO DO  
THE GRIM DUTY FOR WHICH  
THEY HAVE BEEN TRAINED.  
ALL SHARE A DETERMINATION  
TO BLOODY THE NOSES OF  
THE ARGENTINIANS, IF  
NECESSARY.

SUPPORTED BY  
WIVES AND LOVED ONES  
WHO MUST WAIT ANXIOUSLY  
BEHIND, THEY CARRY OUR  
MESSAGE TO THE ENEMY,  
BRITAIN MEANS  
BUSINESS.

MEANWHILE, PRIME MINISTER MARGARET  
THATCHER ADDED HER PERSONAL MESSAGE.  
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE EVENTUAL  
RESTORATION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS TO  
BRITISH SOVEREIGNTY SHE QUOTED QUEEN  
VICTORIA. THE POSSIBILITY OF FAILURE  
DOES NOT EXIST.









FOUR TIMES NOW, IN AS MANY YEARS,  
THAT PRISON OF THE MIND HAS SPAT  
ME OUT-- LIKE HELL SPAT ME OUT IN  
NEWCASTLE.



THEN I WAS A FOOL, BURNING  
WITH MAD PRIDE, CLAIMING FALSE  
VICTORY WHILE BLINDLY WAVING  
THE SEVERED STUMP OF  
INNOCENCE-- IGNORANT, INVOKING  
AN INFERNAL VALEDICTION.



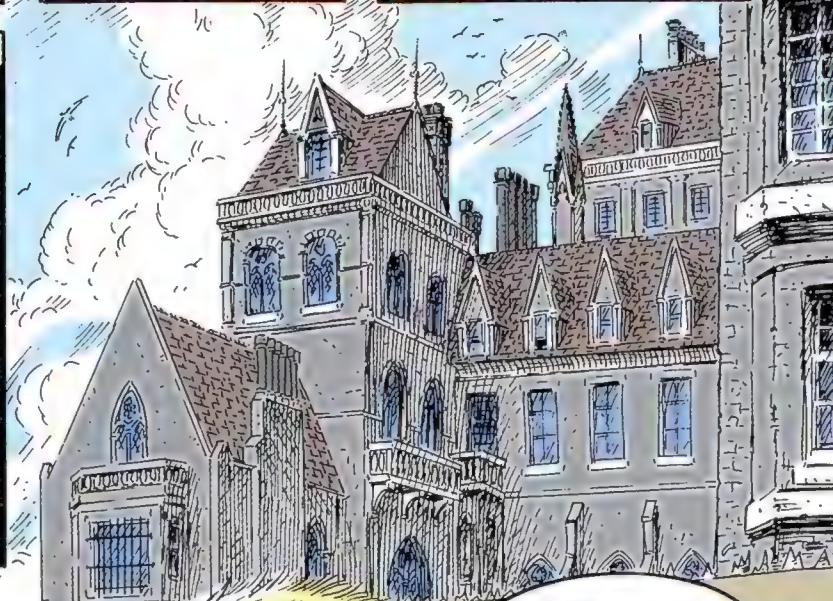
THEY SHOULD MAKE ME  
A BLOODY SAINT...



NOTHING CHANGES, AND THOSE WORDS  
HAVE ECHOED SINCE-- DOORS SLAMMING  
IN A SLEEPLESS NIGHT-- REVEALING  
SLOWLY THAT THE GATES OF HELL ARE  
MANIFOLD, THE LABYRINTH ENDLESS  
AND, ONCE IN, THERE'S NO WAY OUT.



FOR HELL IS ALSO IN LIBERTY. THE  
WIDE TERROR OF THE SKY-- THE  
SERPENT WIND AND HARSH COLD BIRDS.



OFF YOU GO, THEN,  
SON. AND TRY TO STAY  
AWAY LONGER THAN SIX  
MONTHS THIS TIME.



RAVENS CAR  
SECURE FACILITY  
FOR THE DANGEROUSLY  
DERANGED



The BLOODY  
SAINT

PART ONE



WHIRLING, WHIRLING--EVERYTHING  
GOES ROUND, DEATH AND RE-BIRTH,  
GROWTH AND DECAY.

(WRITE IT ALL DOWN, THEY SAID.  
CONTAIN IT, MAKE SOME SENSE OF IT.  
BUT NOW CAN YOU MAKE SENSE OF  
THE SENSELESS OR CONTAIN THE  
SEETHING UNIVERSE?)

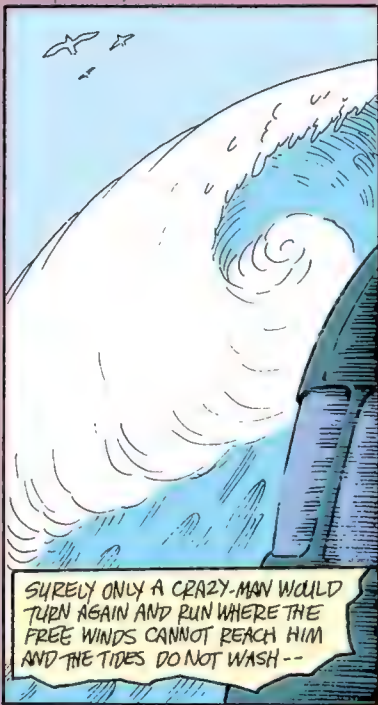
EACH TIME NOW I'VE WALKED FROM  
THAT PLACE--STRUNG OUT BY THE  
HUNGRY WIND--I'VE THOUGHT IT.  
SHOULD I JUST END THE CYCLE  
HERE?

SHOULD I CAST MYSELF ONTO THE  
PRANCING SEA, MEETING THE YELLOW  
EYES OF MOON-WHITE BIRDS--

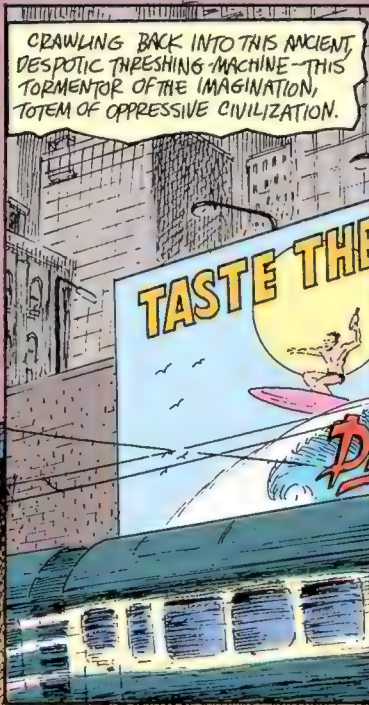
FLESH TO BE CHEWED BY THE EARTH'S  
SAVAGE TEETH, AND BONES GROUND TO  
SAND BY HER INFINITE WAVES?

OBLITERATED-- MIXED  
WITH EVERYTHING.





SURELY ONLY A CRAZY-MAN WOULD  
TURN AGAIN AND RUN WHERE THE  
FREE WINDS CANNOT REACH HIM  
AND THE TIDES DO NOT WASH --



CRAWLING BACK INTO THIS ANCIENT,  
DESPOTIC THRASHING MACHINE--THIS  
TORMENTOR OF THE IMAGINATION,  
TOTEM OF OPPRESSIVE CIVILIZATION.



ONLY A LUNATIC WOULD ESCAPE  
ONE PRISON OF THE MIND AND THEN  
SPURN LIBERTY TO BURROW AGAIN  
IN THIS CONTORTED MAZE--THIS  
SWEATY DUNGEON OF THE SOUL--

LONDON.

Evening  
Standard  
FALKLANDS  
PORT STANLEY  
SURRENDERS  
TO ARGIES!



IT WAS WORSE THIS TIME, MUCH WORSE. ALL  
MY OLD DREAMS ARE COMING TRUE. THERE'S  
A FEVER BREWING HERE, A LUST, A BUNNDS.

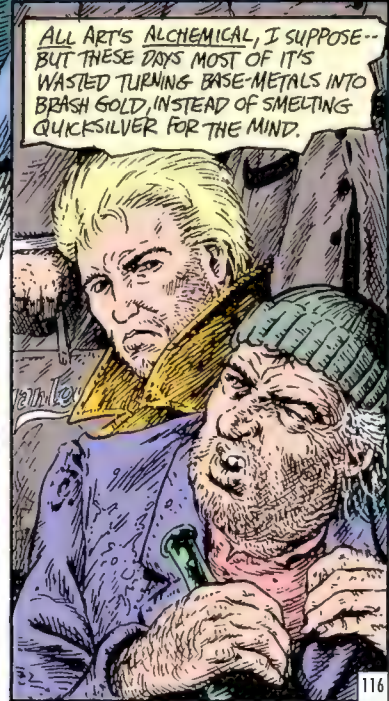
YOU CAN'T SEE IT, ONLY FEEL IT.  
IT'S A HEAT, A FORCE-- SOMETHING  
OLD AND HUNGRY. AGAINST IT, I'M  
A SPENT SALMON DROWNING IN A  
TORRENT.



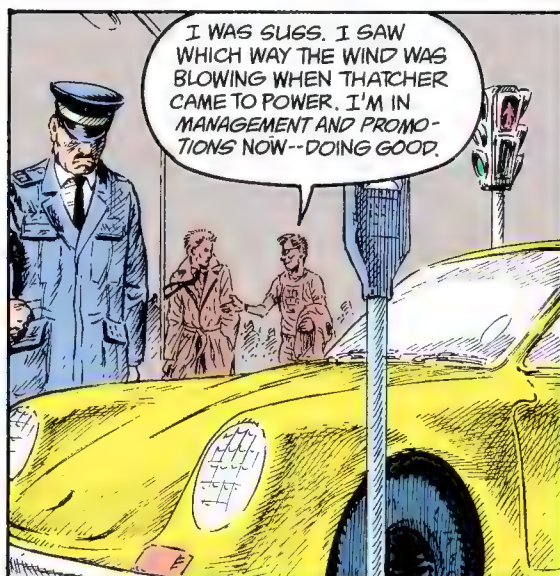
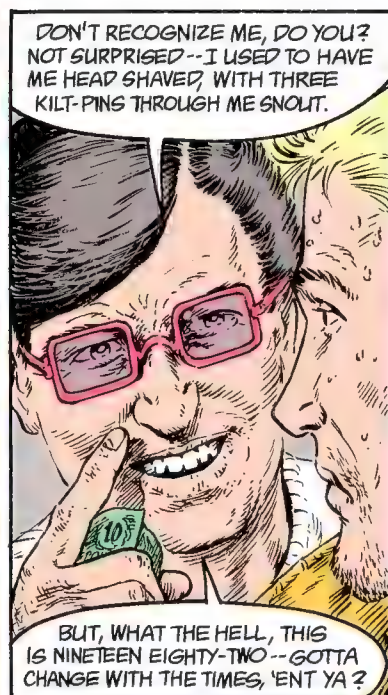
I JUST WISH I COULD SAY IT  
BETTER. THE SHRINKS ARE RIGHT.  
WRITING IT DOWN DOES CHANNEL  
THE EMOTIONAL RIP-TIDES AND  
PROVIDE A FEW CALM EDDIES FOR  
THOUGHT. THERE'S MAGIC IN THE  
USE OF WORDS.



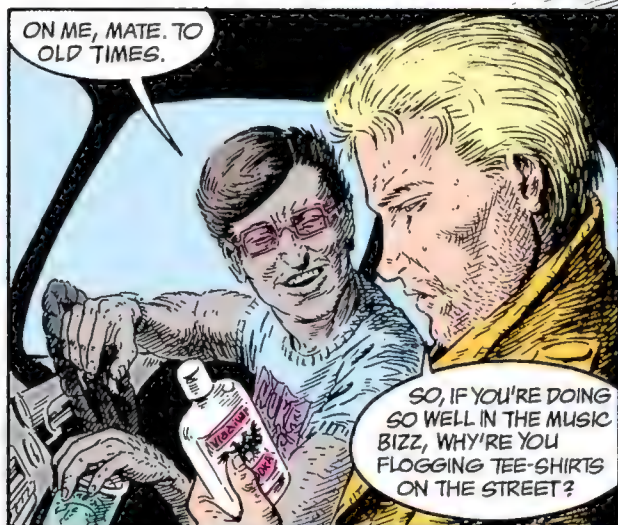
ALL ART'S ALCHEMICAL, I SUPPOSE--  
BUT THESE DAYS MOST OF IT'S  
WASTED TURNING BASE-METALS INTO  
BRASH GOLD, INSTEAD OF SMELTING  
QUICKSILVER FOR THE MIND.





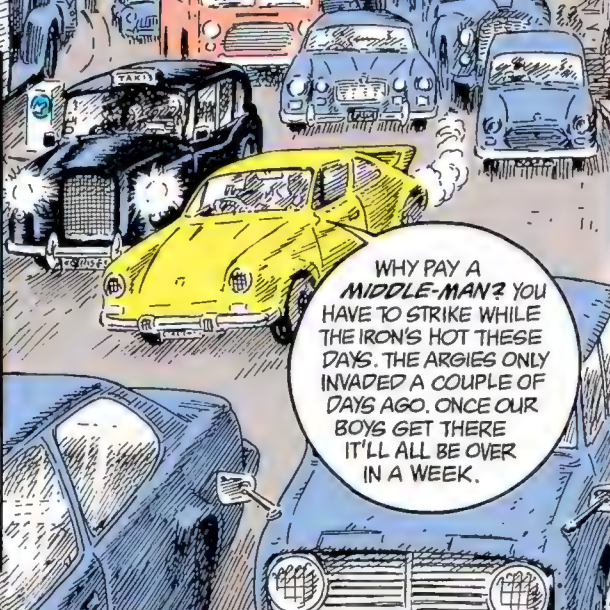






ON ME, MATE. TO OLD TIMES.

SO, IF YOU'RE DOING SO WELL IN THE MUSIC BIZZ, WHY'RE YOU FLOGGING TEE-SHIRTS ON THE STREET?



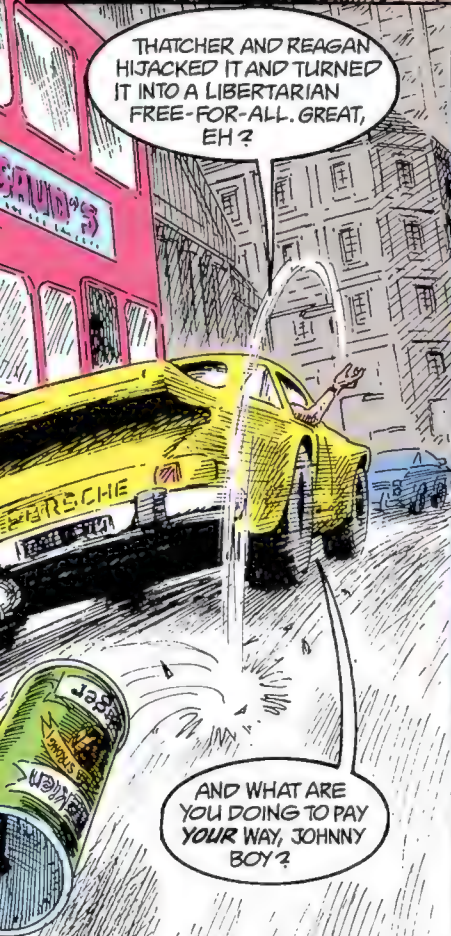
WHY PAY A MIDDLE-MAN? YOU HAVE TO STRIKE WHILE THE IRON'S HOT THESE DAYS. THE ARGIES ONLY INVADDED A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO. ONCE OUR BOYS GET THERE IT'LL ALL BE OVER IN A WEEK.



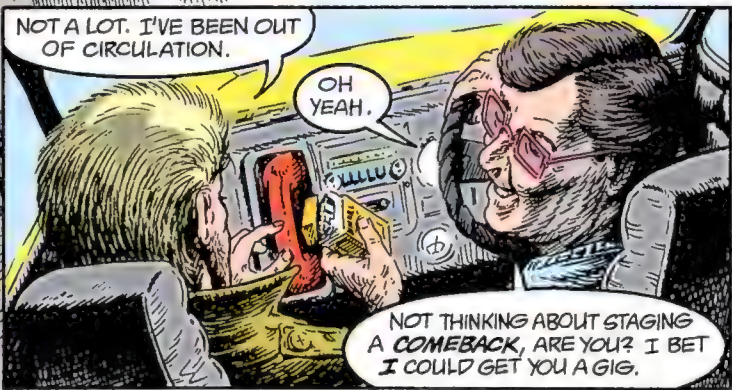
THAT'S THE EXCITING PART ABOUT CAPITALISM. IT'S LIKE SURFING, YOU HAVE TO CATCH THE WAVE.

HERE'S TO WAR.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GOOD OLD ANARCHIC REVOLUTION, THEN?



THATCHER AND REAGAN HIJACKED IT AND TURNED IT INTO A LIBERTARIAN FREE-FOR-ALL. GREAT, EH?



NOT A LOT. I'VE BEEN OUT OF CIRCULATION.

OH YEAH.

NOT THINKING ABOUT STAGING A COMEBACK, ARE YOU? I BET I COULD GET YOU A GIG.



NAH, I'M NOT INTO THAT ANYMORE.

SHAME.

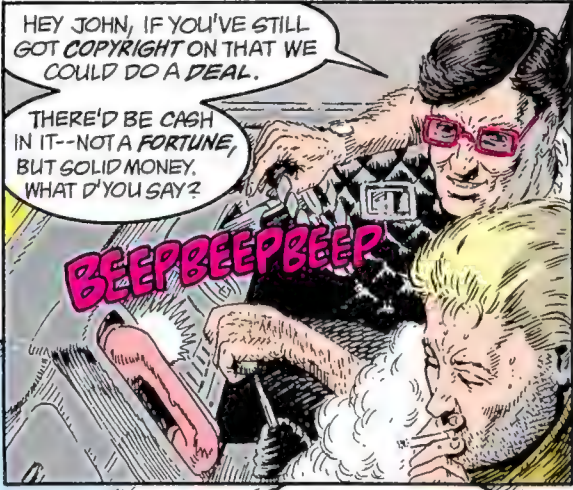
WAIT A MINUTE, THOUGH, DON'T I REMEMBER YOU MAKING A VIDEO OF ONE OF YOUR TRACKS-- BACK IN SEVENTY-SEVEN OR SEVENTY-EIGHT, BEFORE MUSIC VIDEO REALLY TOOK OFF?



HEY JOHN, IF YOU'VE STILL GOT COPYRIGHT ON THAT WE COULD DO A DEAL.

THERE'D BE CASH IN IT--NOT A FORTUNE, BUT SOLID MONEY. WHAT D'YOU SAY?

**BEEP BEEP BEEP**

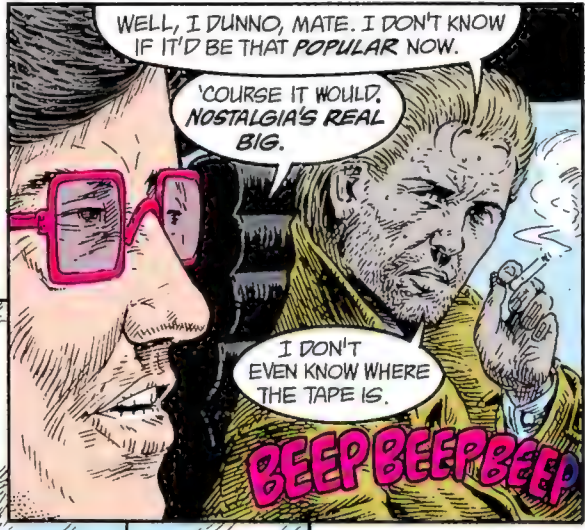


WELL, I DUNNO, MATE. I DON'T KNOW IF IT'D BE THAT POPULAR NOW.

'COURSE IT WOULD. NOSTALGIA'S REAL BIG.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THE TAPE IS.

**BEEP BEEP BEEP**



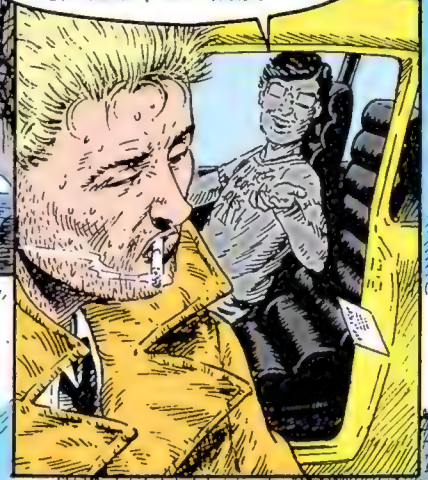
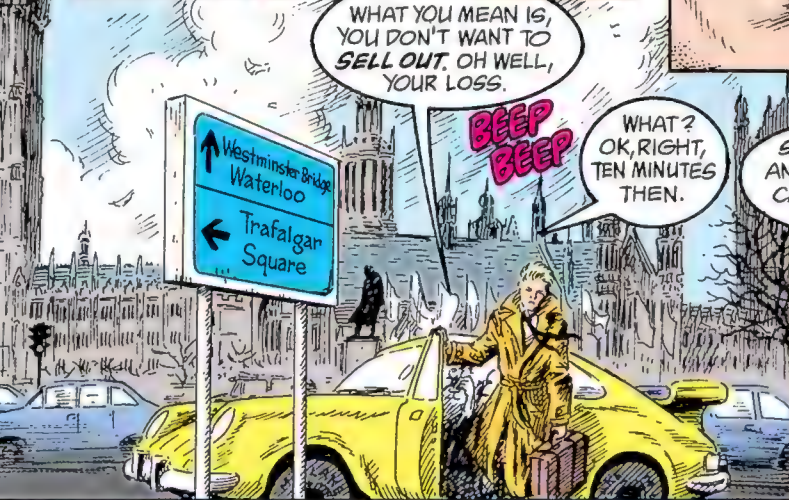
WHAT YOU MEAN IS, YOU DON'T WANT TO SELL OUT. OH WELL, YOUR LOSS.

**BEEP BEEP**

WHAT? OK, RIGHT, TEN MINUTES THEN.

SORRY, GOTTA GO. COKE'S IN AND I'VE GOT TO PICK UP. HERE'S MY CARD, GIVE US A BELL IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

Westminster Bridge  
Waterloo  
Trafalgar Square

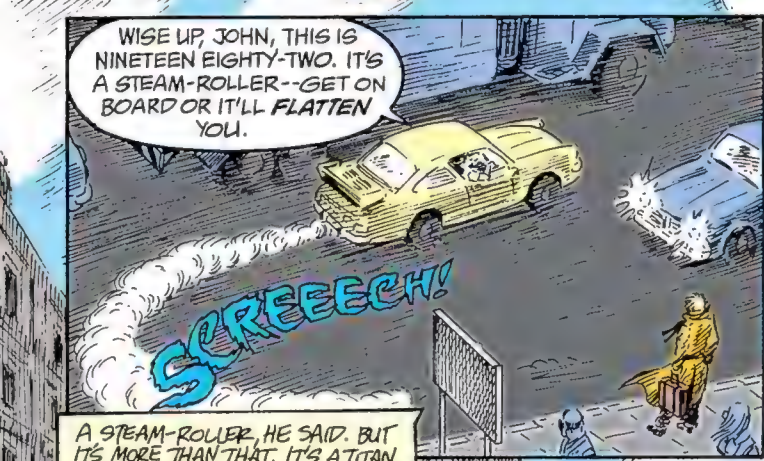


WISE UP, JOHN, THIS IS NINETEEN EIGHTY-TWO. IT'S A STEAM-ROLLER--GET ON BOARD OR IT'LL FLATTEN YOU.

**SCREEECH!**

A STEAM-ROLLER, HE SAID. BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT. IT'S A TITAN, A WAR GOD, A MONOLITHIC ARCHITECTURE THAT BEARS DOWN UPON THE WORLD WITH AWFUL WEIGHT.

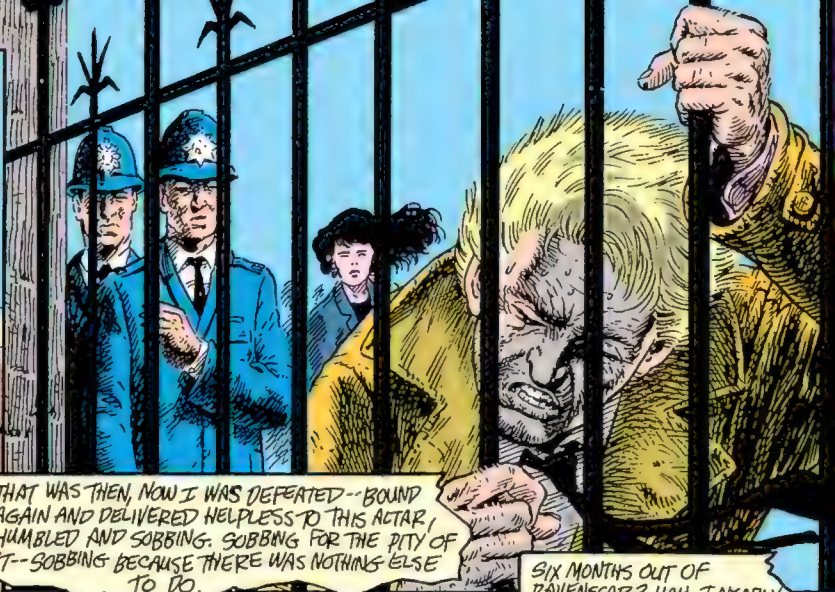
(WRITE IT ALL DOWN, JOHN. ALL THE MADNESS DOWN.)





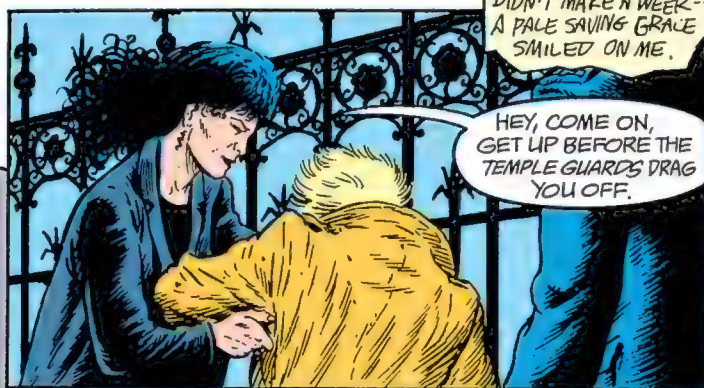


BEFORE NEWCASTLE GAVE ME THE LIE, I THOUGHT I HAD THE POWER--THE ANCIENT VOICE OF THE GIANT ALBION--TO BELLOW MY RAGE AT THIS AUTHORITY THAT DARES TO SPEAK, TO GO TO WAR ON MY BEHALF.



THAT WAS THEN, NOW I WAS DEFEATED--BOUND AGAIN AND DELIVERED HELPLESS TO THIS ACTRESS, HUMBLING AND SOBBING, SOBBING FOR THE PITY OF IT--SOBBING BECAUSE THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE TO DO.

SIX MONTHS OUT OF RAVENSCAR? HAH, I NEARLY DIDN'T MAKE A WEEK--BUT A PALE SAVING GRACE SMILED ON ME.



HEY, COME ON, GET UP BEFORE THE TEMPLE GUARDS DRAG YOU OFF.



HUNH  
HUNFF

I KNOW, IT GETS YOU LIKE THAT.

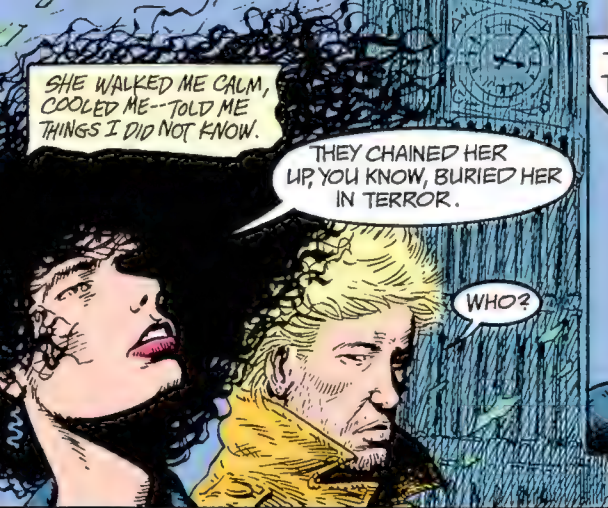
TOUGH TITTY, SOLDIERS--THIS ONE'S MINE.

MOTHER OF ALL PARLIAMENTS--DEMOCRACY, EH? THAT'S A LAUGH. DID YOU KNOW WESTMINSTER ABBEY IS REALLY A SHRINE TO APOLLO--A POXY TEMPLE FOR AN UPSTART SUN-KING DEIFIED BY DEMAGOGUERY?



NO, BUT IT FIGURES.





SHE WALKED ME CALM,  
COOLED ME--TOLD ME  
THINGS I DID NOT KNOW.

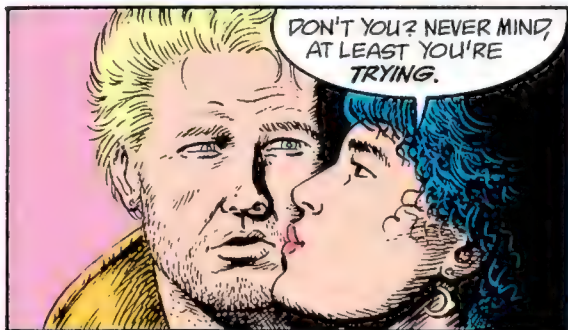
THEY CHAINED HER  
UP, YOU KNOW, BURIED HER  
IN TERROR.

WHO?



THE *GODDESS*. THIS IS HER PRISON--  
THE PRIESTS CHAINED HER, THE  
SUN-WORSHIPPERS GAVE HER  
AN EVIL NAME.

I...I DON'T  
UNDERSTAND.



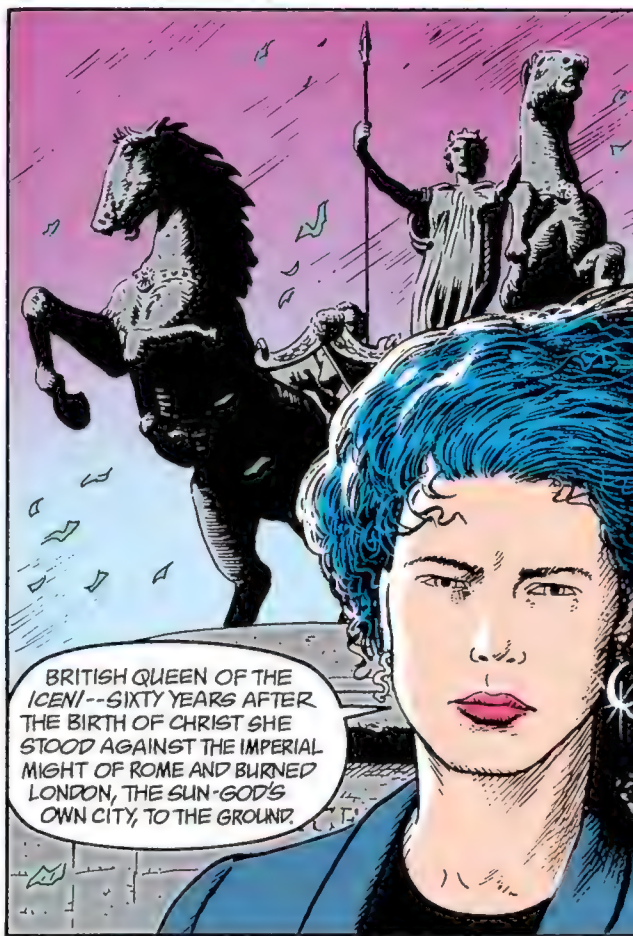
DON'T YOU? NEVER MIND,  
AT LEAST YOU'RE  
TRYING.



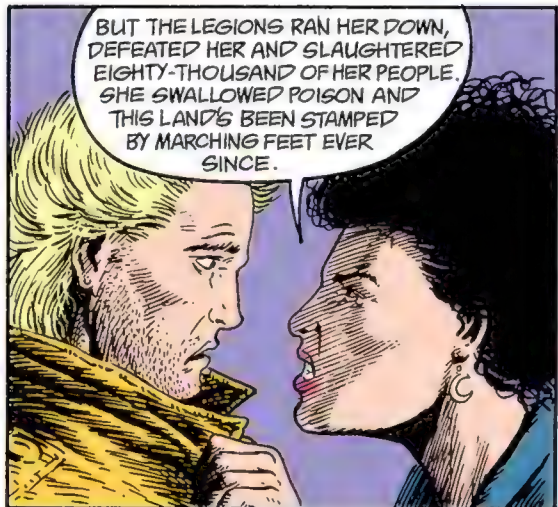
I FEEL SO HELPLESS. I  
JUST WANT TO TEAR IT ALL  
DOWN.

OH, YOU CAN NEVER  
DO IT BY FORCE. IF YOU  
PLAY THEIR GAME,  
THEY'LL CRUSH YOU.

SHE TRIED--  
BOARDICEA.



BRITISH QUEEN OF THE  
ICENI--SIXTY YEARS AFTER  
THE BIRTH OF CHRIST SHE  
STOOD AGAINST THE IMPERIAL  
MIGHT OF ROME AND BURNED  
LONDON, THE SUN-GOD'S  
OWN CITY, TO THE GROUND.



BUT THE LEGIONS RAN HER DOWN,  
DEFEATED HER AND SLAUGHTERED  
EIGHTY-THOUSAND OF HER PEOPLE.  
SHE SWALLOWED POISON AND  
THIS LAND'S BEEN STAMPED  
BY MARCHING FEET EVER  
SINCE.




NO, FIRE AND IRON ARE NOT THE  
GODDESS' WAY. OURS IS A SECRET  
WAR--FOUGHT WITH MAGIC, MEMORY  
AND TRUTH, BY THOSE WHO *KNOW*.

DO YOU  
HAVE SOMEWHERE  
I CAN VISIT  
YOU?

YES.






WAS SHE REAL, THAT MYSTERIOUS  
WOMAN THAT LAID THE COOL WHITENESS  
OF HER SILENT BODY AGAINST ME, LIKE  
HEALING TO A BURNING BROW?

WAS SHE A DELUSION OF MY  
FURNACE BRAIN--A DESPERATE  
GHOST OF NEED?


SWEET SISTER OF MERCY--

RED LIPS,  
WHITE HIPS--


NIGHT SHIPS  
ROCKING ON A  
WHISPERING  
SEA.



THIS MORNING SHE WAS GONE--  
BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. HER  
LEGACY, A SILVER SNAKE OF  
THIN RESOLVE, WRIGGLING IN  
MY FLUTTERING VEINS.

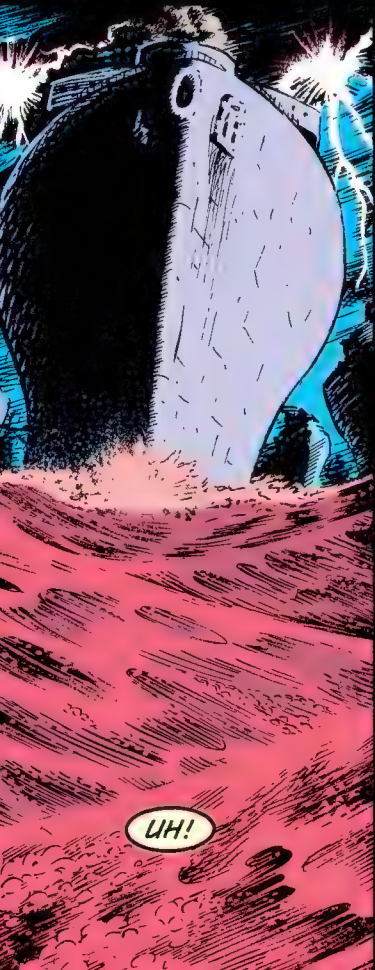
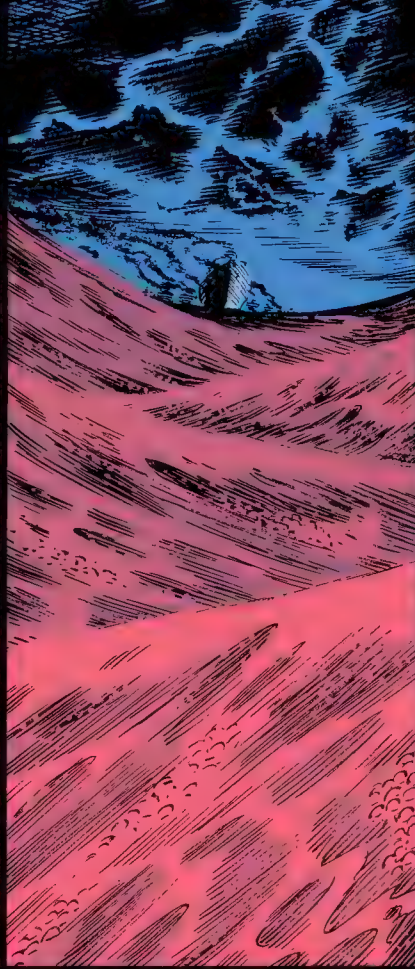
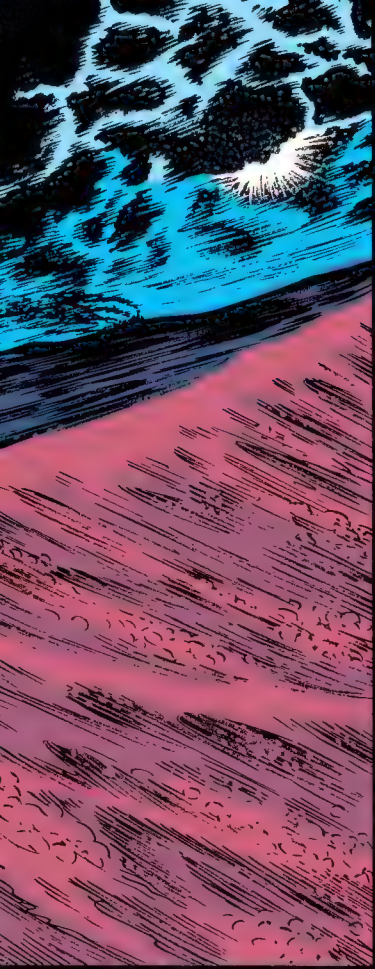


THE SNAKE. CREATURE OF  
DECEPTION--OR SO THEY  
SAY. A USEFUL ALLY AGAINST  
THIS SUN-LIT, STARK-SHADOWED  
WORLD OF SIMPLE DO OR DIE.



FAINT, PERHAPS--BUT THERE  
IS HOPE IN THE ENDURING  
SUBTLETY OF MOONLIT MAGIC.  
A MOTHER'S SMILE, A LOVER'S  
GASP, A GLEAM OF SILVER IN  
A DARKENING SKY.










UH! IRON  
SHIPS ON A BLOODY  
SEA. THE SOW CLEAVES  
ME!




LUH-LORD  
ABBOT...?

UNGH!



UNH  
UNNH!

LORD ABBOT,  
ROUSE UP. YOU'RE  
TANGLED IN THE  
NIGHT-MARE'S  
NEST.



BE STILL,  
LORD ABBOT. YOUR  
SLAVES ARE HERE.

UNNNGH!



ENUH...

LORD ABBOT,  
WAKE UP.

COME CLOSE...  
AID ME TO  
EASE HIM.

GAAH, I CANNOT.  
HE STINKS LIKE  
CORPSE-FLESH.

ENUH...

DO IT... WE  
ARE SLAVES--OR  
DO YOU WISH OUR  
BLOOD TO TINT THE  
MORTAR OF THE  
BASTARD'S NEXT  
CHURCH?

HE'S WET AND  
FOULED. I  
FEAR HIM.

EN...UH...MIES!

THEN HELP  
ME BROTHER, HOLD  
ME CLOSE.

NO! LEAVE ME, BEGONE. THIS  
ANCIENT PASSION WILL NOT BE  
STILLED BY YOUR  
RAW MINISTRATIONS.

# The Bloody Sain

PART TWO





AND  
SOMEONE  
BRING ME  
LIGHT.

WHAT AILS  
HIM?

DEVILS,  
FATHER--DEMONS  
TORMENT HIS  
DREAMS.



LORD ABBOT, FUH-FORGIVE  
OUR TRESPASS...

...BUT  
WE HEARD  
CRIES?



HAH! YOU GAPE  
AND GASP LIKE SEA-  
COWS BEACHED ON  
THE STRAND.

HAVE I  
GROWN HORNS  
AND TAIL?

UH...



BUT LORD ABBOT,  
YOU'RE WOUNDED,  
YOU BLEED.

SHALL  
I SUMMON  
HEALERS?

FOOLS. I HAVE BATTLED  
MONSTERS IN MY SLEEP AND RISEN  
VICTORIOUS. THIS RED JUICE, THIS  
SHITE, IS PRESSED FROM THEM.



SURELY, LORD  
ABBOT, YOU ARE A  
MIGHTY WARRIOR  
FOR GOD.

IN GLAS-TYN-BYRG I HEARD  
IT SAID THAT HOLY ROME WILL  
VENERATE YOUR NAME AND RAISE  
IT IN THE COMPANY OF THOSE GREAT  
SAINTS, PETROC, COLOMBA, AUGUSTINE...



AND DO YOU WISH ME DEAD THEN,  
MONK? DO YOU HAVE A LUST TO BE  
KING-ABBOT OF DUMNONIA?

FOR MUST NOT A  
MAN BECOME MARTYR  
BEFORE GOD NAMES  
HIM SAINT?

I...  
I...





LADY, I TIRE OF THESE STUPID INSECTS BURROWING IN THEIR MIDDEN. I TIRE OF THIS BODY. IT IS OLD, ROTTEN, LEAKING--FLESH FAILS LIKE CARRION ON THE BONE.



I HAVE LIVED TOO LONG, LADY. SURELY IT IS TIME FOR THIS POOR CHILD TO CREEP BACK TO YOUR TEAT.



LISTEN TO THE NORTHMEN'S UPSTART THUNDER GOD BELLOWING LIKE A BAITED BEAR, DEMANDING ACCESS TO HEAVEN'S TURNING CASTLE.

YOU VAIN AND IMBECILIC BRUTE.



HAA, WHEN EVEN THE MOST ANCIENT AND MOST WISE MUST FALL BENEATH THE ONE-GOD'S HUNTING PACKS, HIS DREAM OF GLORY IS BUT RAGE IN A DROWNING MAN.



YES LADY, IT IS SO. I KNOW THIS AGED KING'S TIME IS PAST.

BLOOD AND ORDURE-- THE SCENT OF BIRTH AND DEATH. EVERYTHING GOES ROUND.

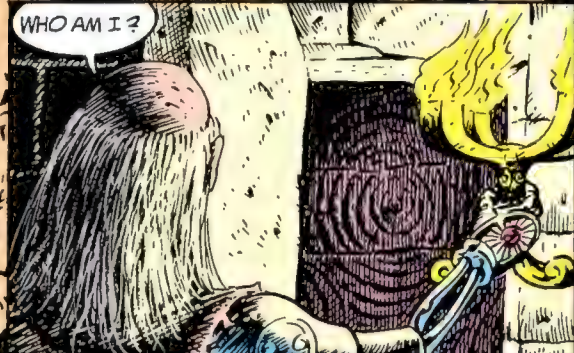


SCUTTLE BACK TO YOUR PRAYERS, YOU CRAB-LICE. THE NIGHT IS WILD AND I MUST KEEP SOLITARY VIGIL FOR THE DAWNING LIGHT OF CHRIST THE SUN.

AH, HE MAKES ME PISS COLD.

HE'S THE VERY WRATH OF GOD.

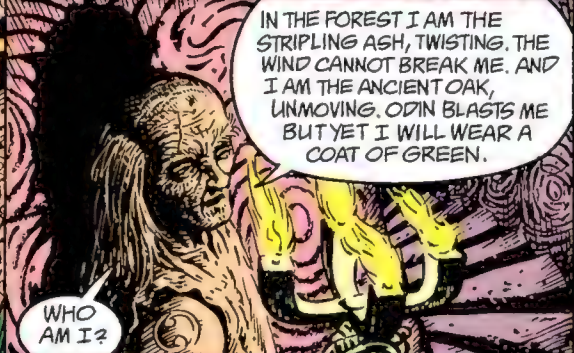




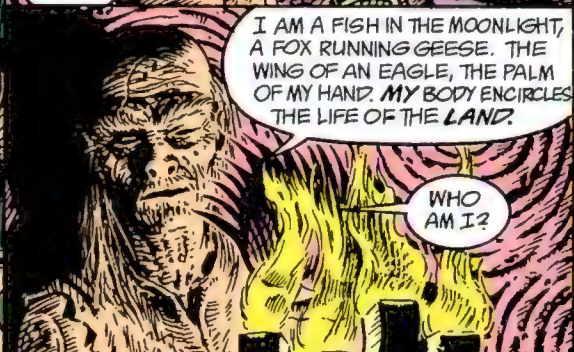
WHO AM I?



I AM THE THRICE-BORN SON OF NO FATHER, WHOSE MOTHER RUTTED IN THE SACRED GROVE, FEEDING ON THE SKULLS OF MANY ENEMIES.



WHO AM I?  
IN THE FOREST I AM THE STRIPLING ASH, TWISTING. THE WIND CANNOT BREAK ME. AND I AM THE ANCIENT OAK, UNMOVING. ODIN BLASTS ME BUT YET I WILL WEAR A COAT OF GREEN.



WHO AM I?  
I AM A FISH IN THE MOONLIGHT, A FOX RUNNING GEESSE. THE WING OF AN EAGLE, THE PALM OF MY HAND. MY BODY ENCIRCLES THE LIFE OF THE LAND.



WHO AM I?  
I AM THE BLOOD IN THE BONE, THE VEIN IN THE STONE, THE SUN-STAG DRAGGED DOWN AND THE THORN IN CHRIST'S CROWN.



WHO AM I?



WELL, KING'S BARD, KING'S SORCERER, POETIC MASTER OF THE ELEMENTS-- HAVE I RIDDLED YOU?

HAS EVEN GREAT MERLIN FORGOTTEN MY NAME?



WHO--

PAH!

--AM--



PFFA!

--I?



PWAAAAAH!



RIDDLED? YES, I'M RIDDLED, BUT BY THIS TUMULT OF WYRMS--NOT BY YOUR IMPOVERISHED POETRY.

WHY, THERE WERE KITCHEN SLAVES IN ARTHUR'S COURT COULD CAST A SATYRE WHICH WOULD CHOKe YOU ON YOUR TONGUE.



THIS IS TRULY THE ENDING TIME-- WHEN MAGIC IS SO SHRIVELED THAT A BRASH BOAST MAY BE CALLED A RIDDLE.

SHUT-UP. JUST SAY MY NAME.





SPEAK IT, OR I'LL  
CALL DOWN **BRAN'S**  
BIRDS TO FEAST ONCE  
MORE UPON YOUR  
EYES.

WAIT, I CHANGE MY  
MIND. **SING** IT--SHOW  
ME YOUR MAGIC HAS  
NOT MOULDERED WITH  
YOUR FACE.

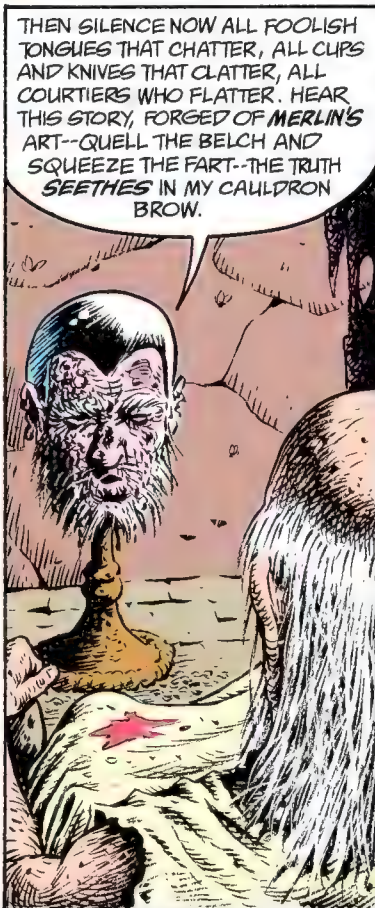


SING ME MY LIFE, **GREAT MERLIN**.  
AND IF IT IS A **GOOD** SONG, SONG  
WITH FINE POETRY IN THE **OLD**  
WAY, I WILL UNCHAIN YOUR SOUL  
AND LET IT SWIM AT LAST TO  
**OTHERWORLD**.



I AM **OLD** MERLIN. AND I  
WOULD REVIEW MY TIME  
BEFORE ITS LAST LEG IS  
RUN. SOON I SHALL  
PASS **BEYOND**.

SO **SOON**--WHAT,  
HAVE YOU NO MORE **SONS**  
TO FEED THE MOTHER  
IN YOUR PLACE?



THEN SILENCE NOW ALL FOOLISH  
TONGUES THAT CHATTER, ALL CURS  
AND KNIVES THAT CLATTER, ALL  
COURTIERS WHO FLATTER. HEAR  
THIS STORY, FORGED OF **MERLIN'S**  
ART--QUELL THE BELCH AND  
SQUEEZE THE FART--THE TRUTH  
**SEETHES** IN MY CAULDRON  
BROW.



THAT WAS ACCORDING  
TO THE **LORE**. THERE WAS  
**WORK** TO BE DONE--**GREAT**  
MAGIC TO BE WROUGHT.

OF COURSE--  
I HAD FORGOT  
ALL THAT.



HEAR THIS NOBLE SONG I SING,  
THE SONG OF **GREAT**  
**KON-STEN-TYN**, THE KING.

LORD OF **DUMNONIA** AND  
THE WESTERN LANDS, INHERITOR  
OF **ARTHUR'S** CROWN, CUNNING  
MAN, MAGI--PUH--PUH--  
PRIEST...



PAH! PAH! I CANNOT. I'M TIRED -- TOO MANY YEARS THESE WYRMS HAVE CHOKED ME. MY POWER IS FLY-BLOWN AS BATTLEFIELD MEAT.

SING IT! DO NOT ENRAGE ME-- OR YOU'LL PERCH ATOP THAT RUSTING SPIKE LONG AFTER I AM GONE.

START AT THE BEGINNING. TELL OF THE DREAM. THE DREAM OF ARTHUR THE BROKEN KING.

MERLIN...

"LATE IT WAS IN ARTHUR'S COURT, WHEN ALL THE BATTLES HAD BEEN FOUGHT AND ALL THE MAGIC MERLIN WROUGHT WAS BROUGHT TO NOUGHT BY SUBTLE SLEIGHT OF SERPENT STEALTH."

"HAGGARD IN THE HEROES HALL, IN CAMELOT, THE TROUBLED KING AWOKE-- A FEEBLE SUN AT DUSK, RUFFLING A RESTLESS LAND WITH TOOTHLESS CALL."

MERLIN...

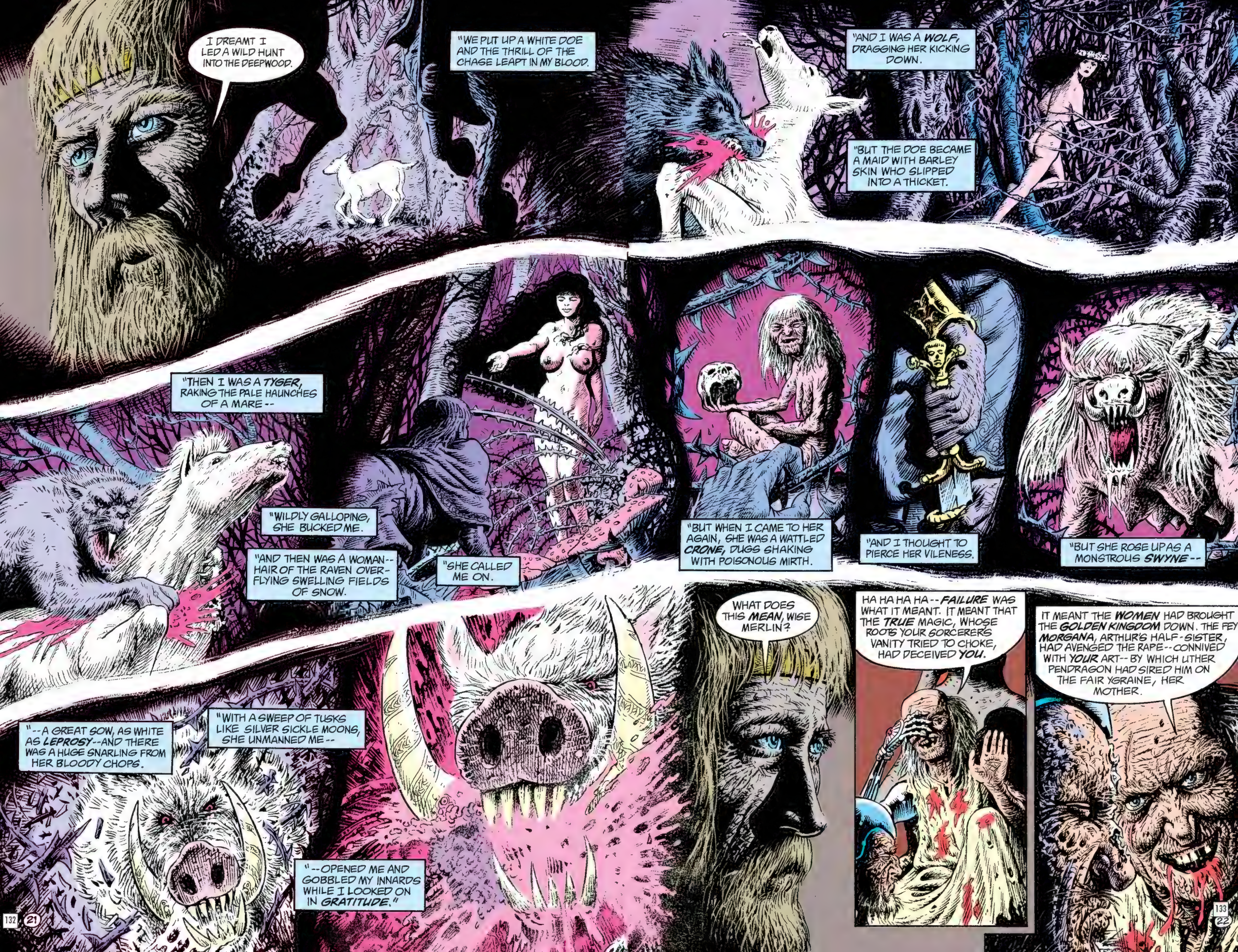
MERL...

PEACE ARTHUR-- I AM HERE, AS ALWAYS, A MOTHER RUNNING TO HER INFANT'S WALL.

I HAVE DREAMT A TERRIBLE DREAM.

THEN SPEAK IT TO ME, ARTHUR-- FOR ALL THE WORLDS ARE WOVEN OUT OF DREAMS.





I DREAMT I  
LED A WILD HUNT  
INTO THE DEEPWOOD.

"WE PUT UP A WHITE DOE  
AND THE THRILL OF THE  
CHASE LEAPT IN MY BLOOD.

"AND I WAS A WOLF,  
DRAGGING HER KICKING  
DOWN.

"BUT THE DOE BECAME  
A MAID WITH BARLEY  
SKIN WHO SLIPPED  
INTO A THICKET.

"THEN I WAS A TYGER,  
RAKING THE PALE HAUNCHES  
OF A MARE --

"WILDLY GALLOPING,  
SHE BUCKED ME.

"AND THEN WAS A WOMAN --  
HAIR OF THE RAVEN OVER-  
FLYING SWELLING FIELDS  
OF SNOW.

"SHE CALLED  
ME ON.

"BUT WHEN I CAME TO HER  
AGAIN, SHE WAS A WATTLED  
CRONE, DUGS SHAKING  
WITH POISONOUS MIRTH.

"AND I THOUGHT TO  
PIERCE HER VILENESS.

"BUT SHE ROSE UP AS A  
MONSTROUS SWYNE --

"-- A GREAT SOW, AS WHITE  
AS LEPROSY -- AND THERE  
WAS A HUGE SNARLING FROM  
HER BLOODY CHOPS.

"WITH A SWEEP OF TUSKS  
LIKE SILVER SICKLE MOONS,  
SHE UNMANNED ME --

"-- OPENED ME AND  
GOBBLED MY INNARDS  
WHILE I LOOKED ON  
IN GRATITUDE."

WHAT DOES  
THIS MEAN, WISE  
MERLIN?

HA HA HA HA -- FAILURE WAS  
WHAT IT MEANT. IT MEANT THAT  
THE TRUE MAGIC, WHOSE  
ROOTS YOUR SORCERERS  
VANITY TRIED TO CHOKE,  
HAD DECEIVED YOU.

IT MEANT THE WOMEN HAD BROUGHT  
THE GOLDEN KINGDOM DOWN. THE FEY  
MORGANA, ARTHUR'S HALF-SISTER,  
HAD AVENGED THE RAPE -- CONNIVED  
WITH YOUR ART -- BY WHICH UTHUR  
PENDRAGON HAD Sired HIM ON  
THE FAIR YGRAINE, HER  
MOTHER.





WHAT **SPELL** DID SHE USE, MERLIN? WHAT SILVERY-SCALED WORDS DID SHE SLIP INTO THE EAR OF YOUR SHINING HERO TO BRING HIM TO HER BED AND STEAL HIS REGAL SEED?

PAH!

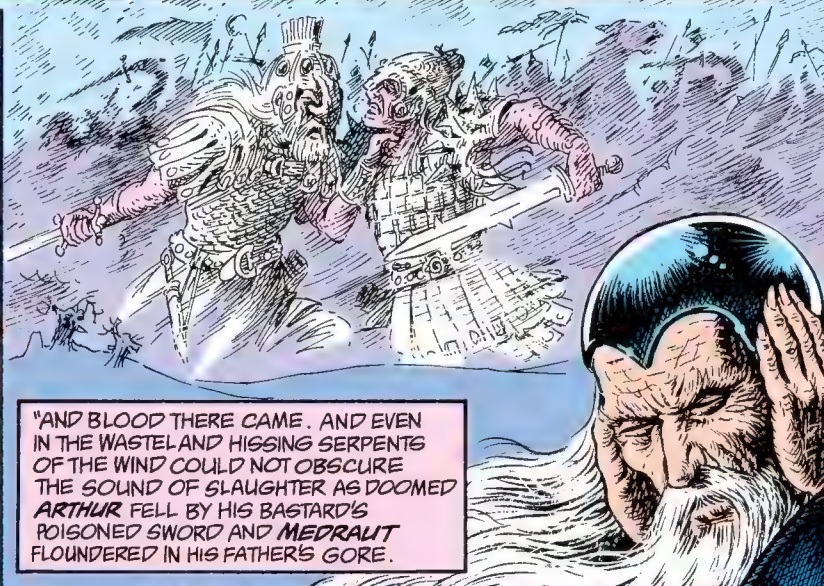


DID YOU SPIT **THEN**, GREAT MERLIN? OR DID YOU RANT AND BUTCHER BABES AS THROUGH THE DARKENING YEARS **HE** GREW? HIM -- NEMESIS-- **MEDRAUT**. THE SISTER-BEGOTTEN SON, SHADOW OF THE KING.

SING ON THEN, BARD.



"HEAR HOW GRIEVING MERLIN TURNED HIS BACK ON STRICKEN CAMELOT, AS YEARS OF WINTER BOUND THE LAND IN CHAINS THAT ONLY BLOOD COULD THAW.



"AND BLOOD THERE CAME. AND EVEN IN THE WASTELAND HISsing SERPENTS OF THE WIND COULD NOT OBSCURE THE SOUND OF SLAUGHTER AS DOOMED ARTHUR FELL BY HIS BASTARD'S POISONED SWORD AND **MEDRAUT** FLOUNDERED IN HIS FATHER'S GORE.



"AND SO THE MOON OCCLUDES THE SUN AT DAWN AND BLACKNESS CHILLS. BUT AS IT IS ABOVE, THEN SO BELOW. THE SUN DEVoured MUST YET BE BORN AGAIN.

"NOW HEAR WISE MERLIN'S DOLOROUS SONG. THOUGH IN THIS WORLD HIS TIME IS OVER LONG, ONCE MORE HE MUST WALK WHERE HIS FEET HAVE THrice TROD IN THE HOLY PEACE OF THE WOOD--AND FIND THE BOY-KING **KON-STEN-TYN**. FOR THAT WHICH ENDS MUST YET BEGIN."

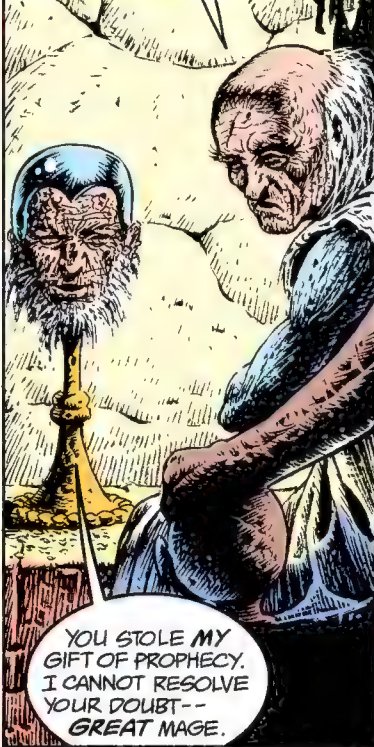




ENOUGH! **THIS** IS NOT **HERO'S** POETRY. THERE IS NO **POWER** IN THIS STAMMERING CHANT. THE **TRUTH** OF MY LIFE DROWNS IN YOUR IDIOT'S DROOL.

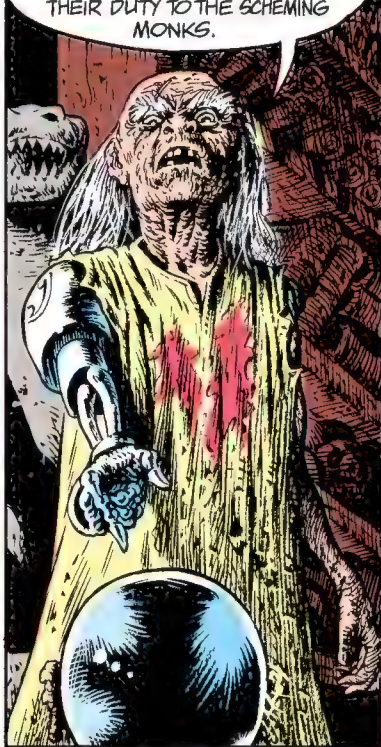


IS IT ALL FLED AWAY, IS IT ALL FOR NOTHING? HAVE THESE STUPID ONE-GOD PRIESTS **REALLY** KILLED THE DRAGON? WILL I FAIL TOO?



YOU STOLE MY GIFT OF PROPHECY. I CANNOT RESOLVE YOUR DOUBT--  
**GREAT MAGE.**

DO NOT MOCK ME. YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THAT KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT DOUBT IS MERE BLIND FAITH--THE CURSE OF ROMANS AND CHRISTIANS AND NERVELESS CITY-MEN WHO ABANDON THEIR DUTY TO THE SCHEMING MONKS.



AND YET YOU RULE A **CHRISTIAN** LAND.

BETTER THE RULER THAN THE RULED.

BETTER THE SLAVE THAN THE SHACKLE.



DON'T CROSS WORDS WITH ME, YOU DOTARD. I HAVE A MIND TO LIGHT THIS WICK AND MAKE YOU A LANTERN FOR MY LAST HOURS IN THIS WORLD.

HA HA!



I HAVE A MIND--  
AND SO I **WILL.**



HA HA  
HA HA HA!





HA HA  
HAHAHA!



HAHA HA  
HAHAHA!

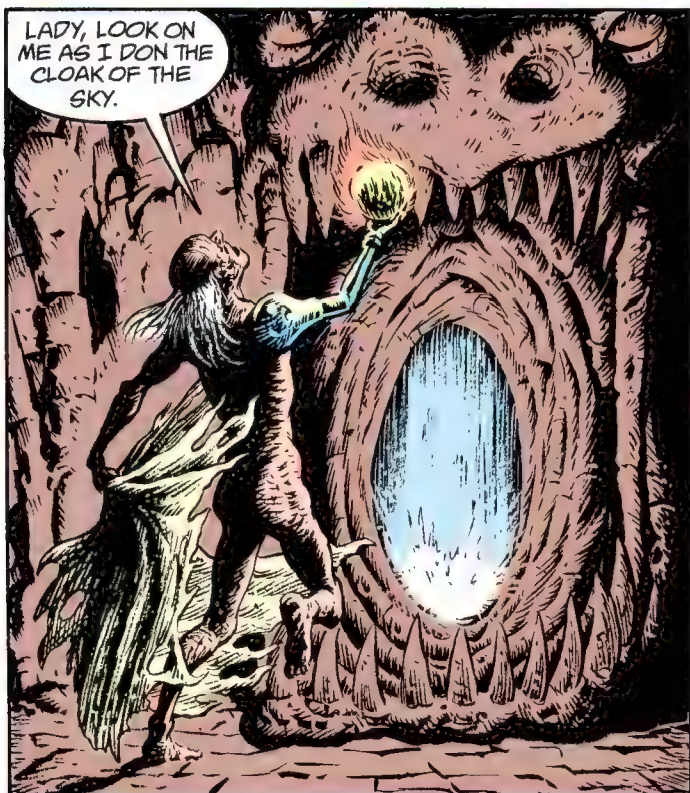


HA HA HA...  
HUUNNNNGH!

THIS BODY  
FAILS ME.



TIME GROWS  
SHORT. COME MERLIN,  
LET'S USE YOUR  
SMOLDERING INTELLECT  
TO LIGHT THE WAY  
TO OTHERWORLD.



LADY, LOOK ON  
ME AS I DON THE  
CLOAK OF THE  
SKY.



LADY,  
CLEANSE  
ME.





LADY PITY ME,  
AS I AM BORN INTO  
THE BELLY OF THE  
DRAGON.

FOR I WAS YOUR  
CHILD; YOU GAVE ME  
MILK. I WAS YOUR LOVER;  
YOU GAVE ME POWER.  
I AM YOUR FOOD; YOU  
GIVE ME REST.



LADY, HEAR MY SONG  
AND JUDGE IF I HAVE  
SERVED YOU WELL.




SING, YOU  
CANTANKEROUS  
ROASTED THING. FOR  
AS YOU KNOW, THIS  
MIRROR-POOL IS YOUR  
GATE TO OTHER-  
WORLD.



SO IF YOU WOULD COOL YOUR  
FEVERISH BRAINS *THIS* SIDE  
OF THE MILLENNIUM, THEN  
SING, GREAT MERLIN --  
**SING!**





ACH ACH... AND SO **TIRELESS** MERLIN SOUGHT OUT THE BOY AND TRAINED HIM IN THE ARTS OF WAR AND POLITICS AND SACRED LORE.

"THEN RAISED HIM VICTORIOUS TO HOLD THE WESTERN SHORE, THE ANCIENT HOME, AGAINST THE BIGOT PRIESTS OF ROME."

THE KING, THE KING. MIGHTY KON-STEN-TYN, THE KING.

LOOK AT 'IM. 'E'S **FIERCE**. THEY SAY MERLIN FOUND 'IM RUNNING WILD WITH THE FOREST SWINE.

I'D ROOT FOR OAK-NUTS WITH 'IM. I'D SCRATCH ON HIS BRISTLES.

THE LIFE'S COME BACK TO THE LAND. THE SKULLS OF OUR ENEMIES WILL FEED THE **GODDESS** IN THE GROVES AGAIN.

THE **NORTHMEN** AND THE FATHER-LOVING **ENGLISH** ARE VANQUISHED. CHILDREN HOWL FATHERLESS IN THEIR FILTHY WARRENS.

HE'S **ARTHUR** RETURNED. SEE HOW HE GLOWS WITH THE POWER OF OF KINGS. THAT'S THE SWORD **EXCALIBUR**, 'E'S GOT, Y'KNOW.

YOU SURE?

NO, HEATHEN--





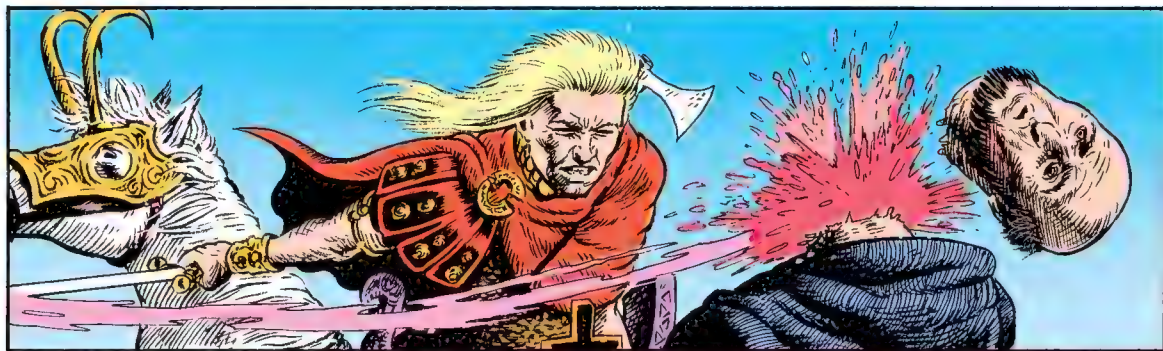
SORCERER,  
YOUR MURDEROUS  
SERPENT ARTS OF  
HELL SHALL NOT  
PREVAIL AGAINST  
THE ONE-  
GOD--

--WHOSE  
LIGHT SAVES THIS  
BENIGHTED  
WORLD.



NO? YOU  
SAY NOT,  
MONK?

I KNOW  
THE WILL OF  
GOD.



THE KING. THE KING.  
KON-STEN-TYN.

THE WILL OF  
THEIR GOD THEY  
MAY KNOW, IF IT  
IS SO SIMPLE--  
BUT MINE THEY  
SHALL NEVER  
COMPREHEND.

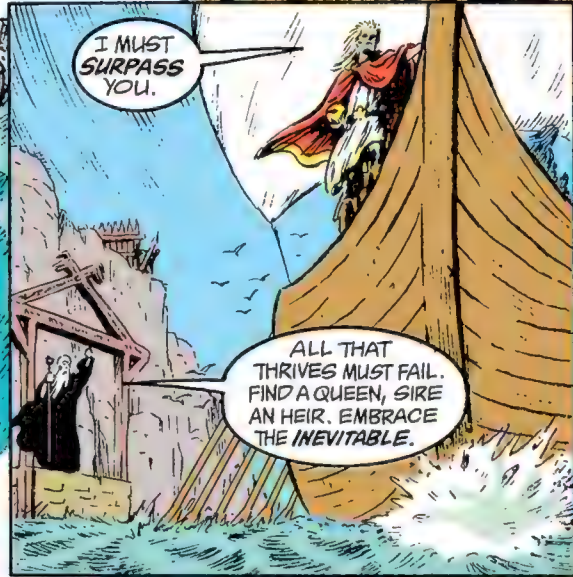
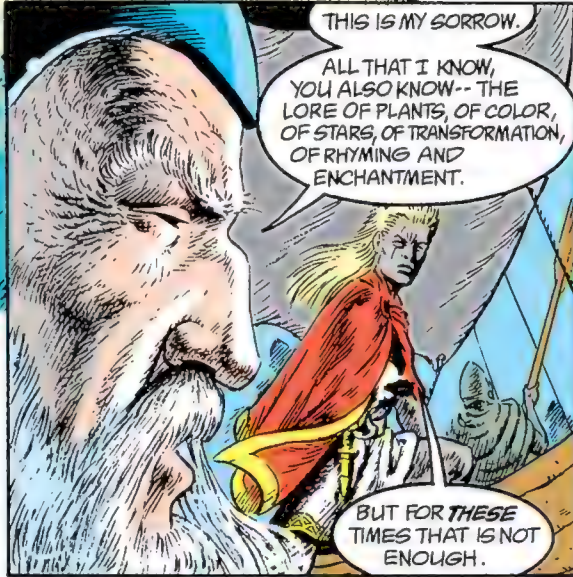
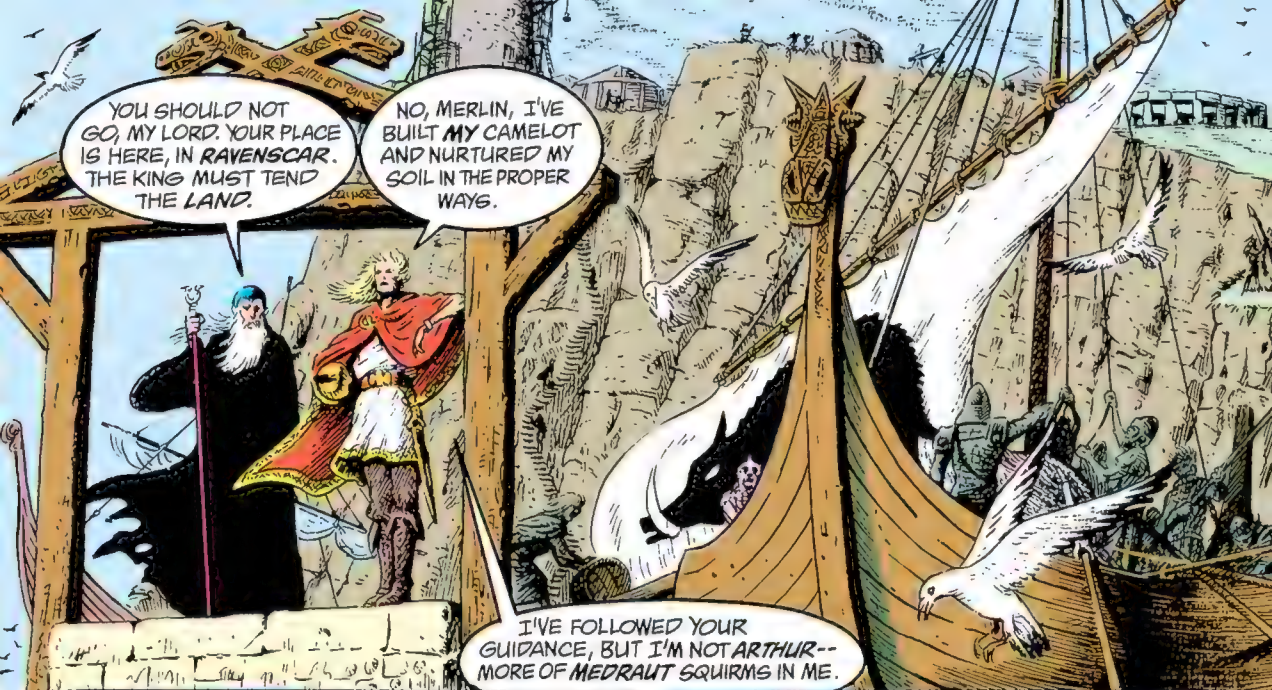
"BUT THE ONE-GOD HAS MANY  
HEADS AND IT THRIVES FROM  
ITS OWN SPILLED BLOOD.

"IT TAKES MANY BATTLES TO  
LEARN THAT THE SCABBARD  
IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD.

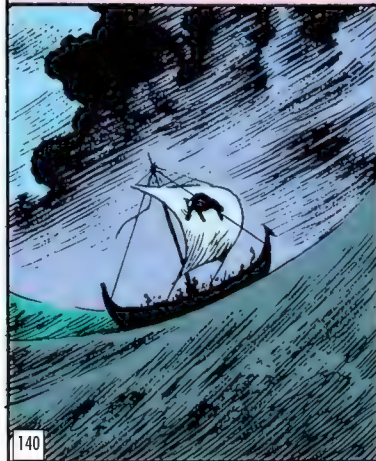


"AND WARLIKE KON-STEN-TYN,  
HE FOUGHT THEM EVERYONE. FOR  
THEY WERE RESTLESS TIMES AND  
HE WAS THE HERO, THOUGH THE  
HERO'S TIME WAS DONE."





"BUT GREAT KON-STEN-TYN EMBRACED MYSTERY, SAILING OUT ON THE WESTERN SEA TOWARDS THE WORLD'S RIM--WHERE SANK ATLANTIS FROM WHOSE DROWNED SKULLS ALL FISH OF KNOWLEDGE SWIM.



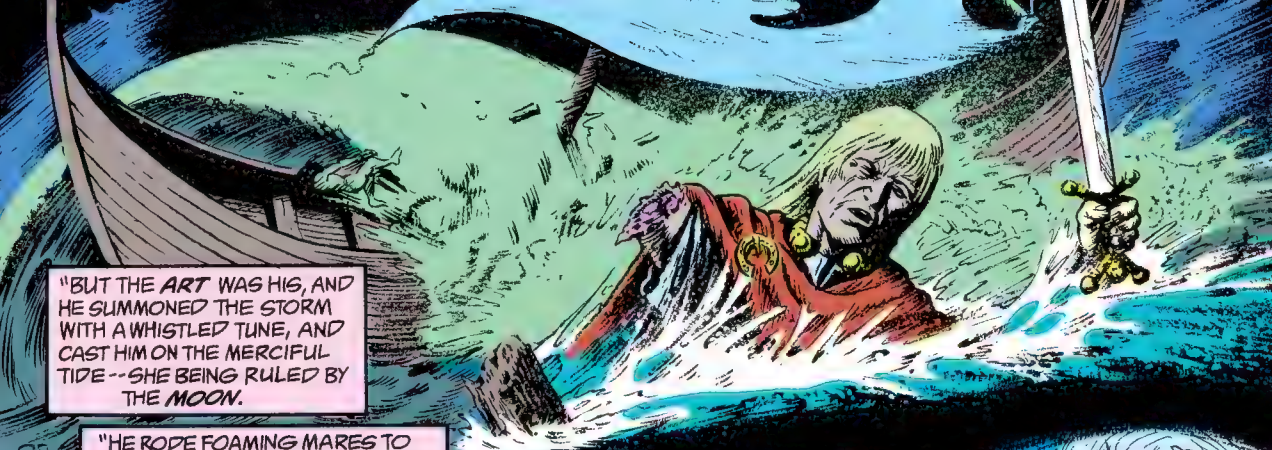
"BUT MAN-DEVOURING PICTISH PYRATES CAUGHT THEM OFF THE SHORES OF A WILD LAND.



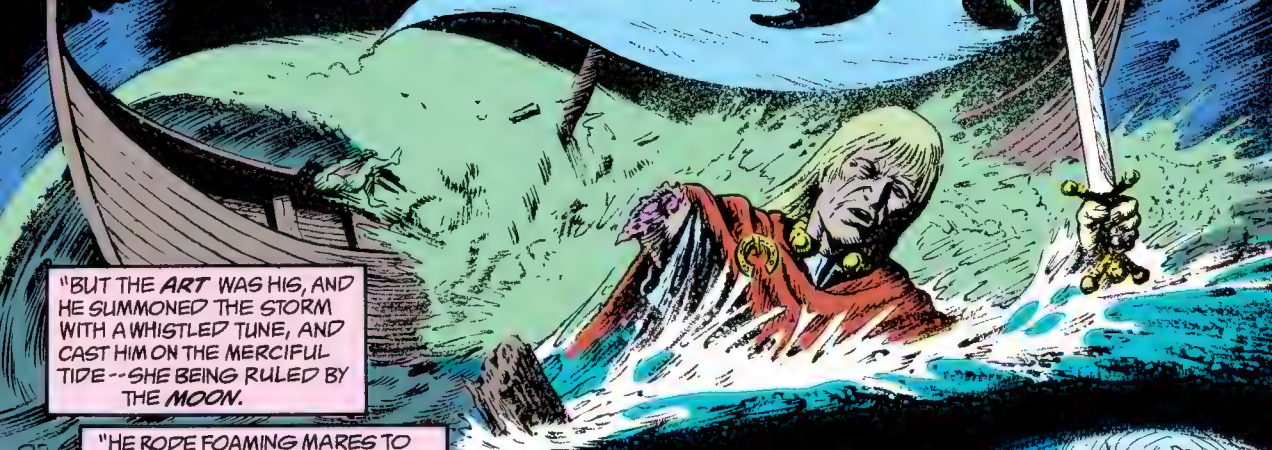
"THEY BUTCHERED HIS STOUT COMRADES, AND FROM THE KING SMOTE OFF HIS HAND.



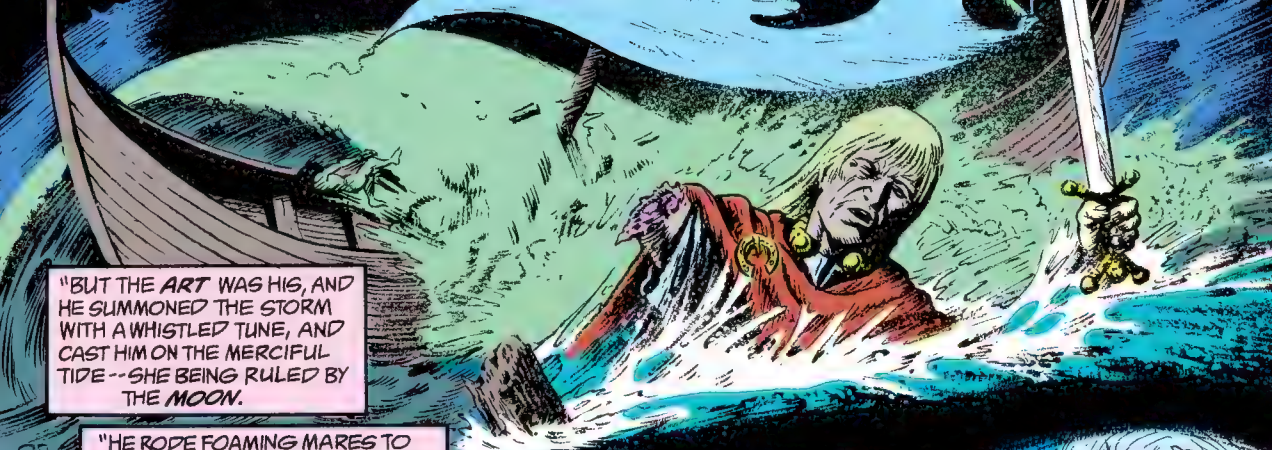




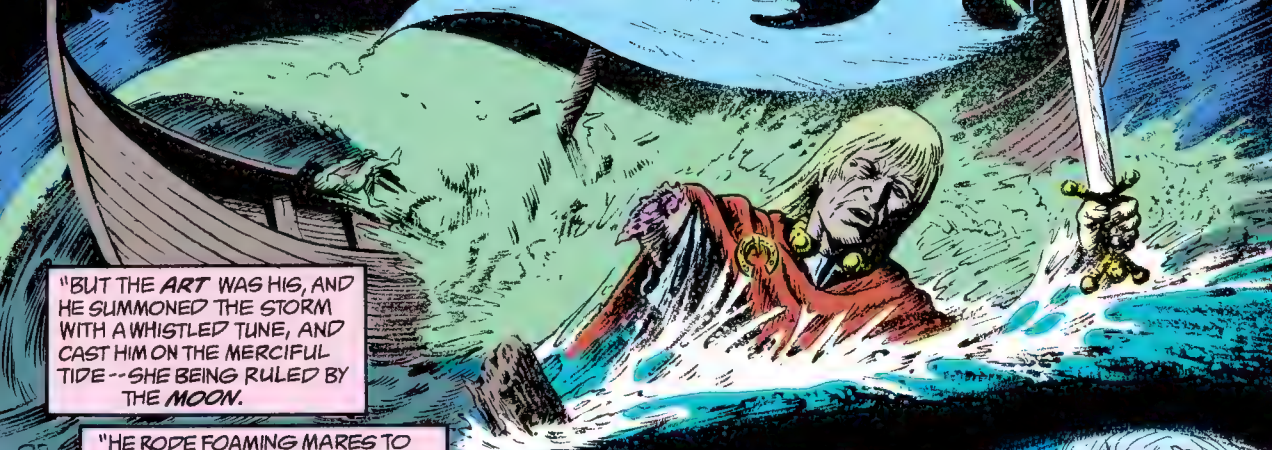
"BUT THE ART WAS HIS, AND HE SUMMONED THE STORM WITH A WHISTLED TUNE, AND CAST HIM ON THE MERCIFUL TIDE--SHE BEING RULED BY THE MOON.



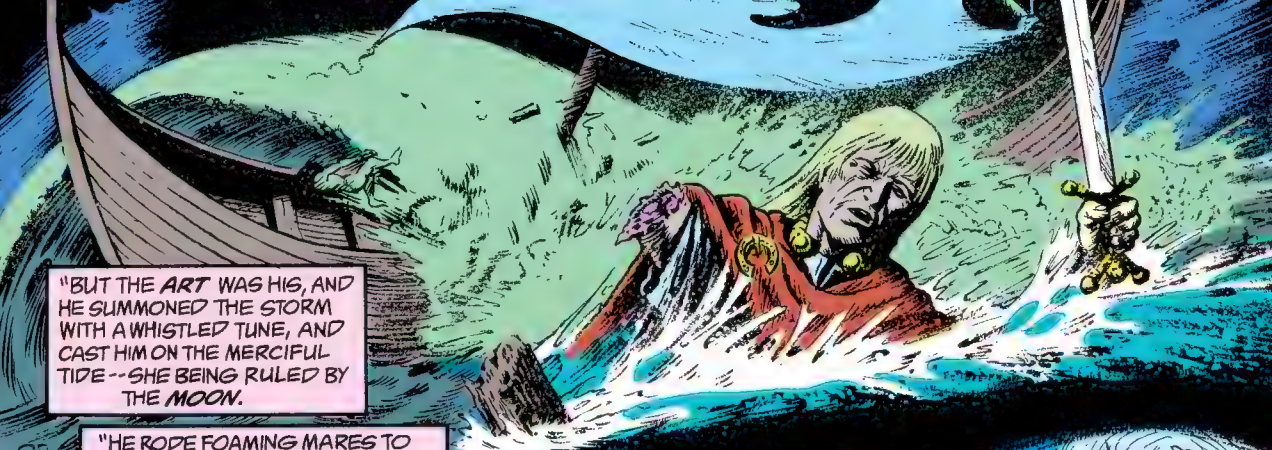
"HE RODE FOAMING MARES TO THE LONG WHITE BEACH OF THAT LAND WHERE, BENEATH THE HEATH OUT OF APOLLO'S REACH, ENDURED THE LAST OF THE SIDHE.



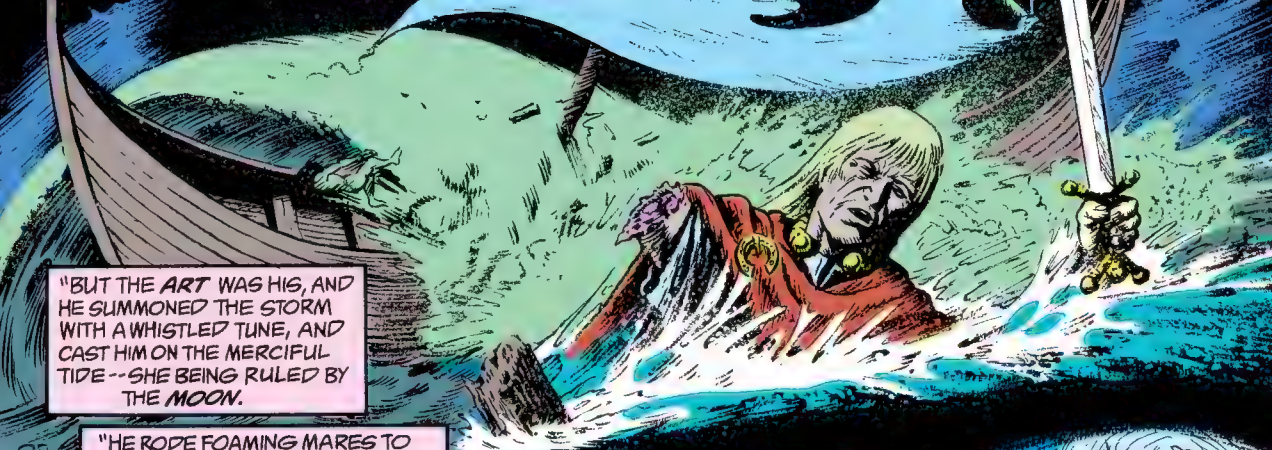
"THEY ADMITTED HIM TO THEIR HOLLOW HILL WHERE MANY MARVELS BEDAZZLED HIS STARE, NOT LEAST OF THESE THE WOMEN FAIR--FOR HE WAS A LUSTY HERO.



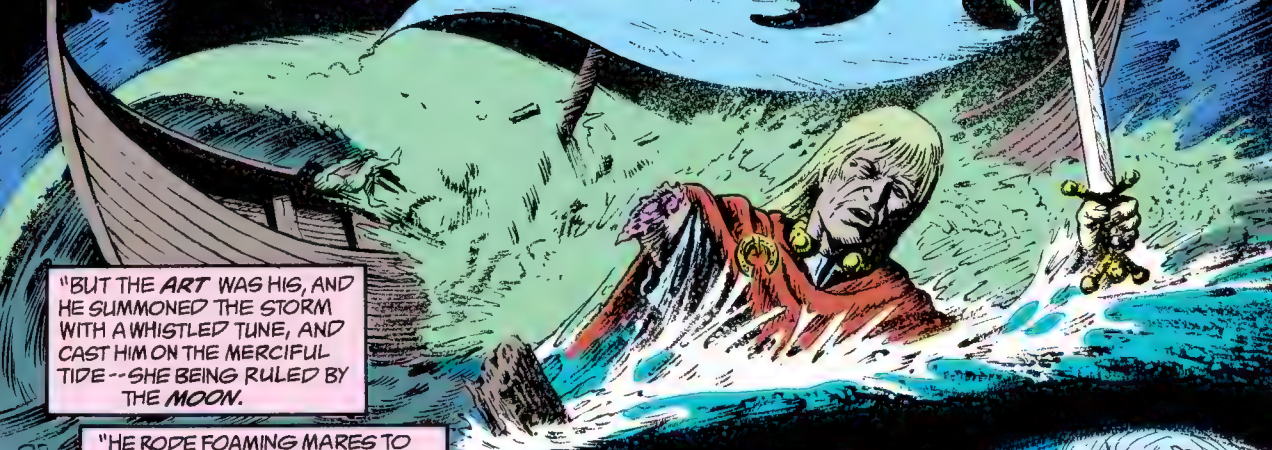
"SO THEY HEALED HIS PAIN AND FORGED HIM AN ARM OF PURE SILVER RUN FROM THE MOTHER'S VEIN.



"AND IN THIS FAERY PLACE, BY THE MOTHER'S GRACE, HE LOVED THE QUEEN, NIMUE. FOR HE WAS A HERO.



"SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL, AND HE THOUGHT NOT TO GO, TO ABANDON HIS CROWN AND STAY IN THE FOLDS OF HER STAR-SHOT GOWN.



"BUT IT WOULD NOT BE SO--FOR HE WAS A HERO."



"FOR A YEAR AND A DAY IN THE CAVES HE ABODE, AND SHE BORE HIM A SON BY THE SEED HE SOWED."

LET ME COME.

NO. YOU ARE A **MAN** IN THE **TIME** OF MEN. WE ARE THE LAST OF THE VANISHING PAST.

REMEMBER US.

TAKE HIM--  
OUR GIFT TO THE  
WORLD AS WE  
LEAVE.

"AND KON-STEN-TYN THE **POTENT** HERO CAME HOME WITH HIS HEIR."

THE KING.

MY SON.

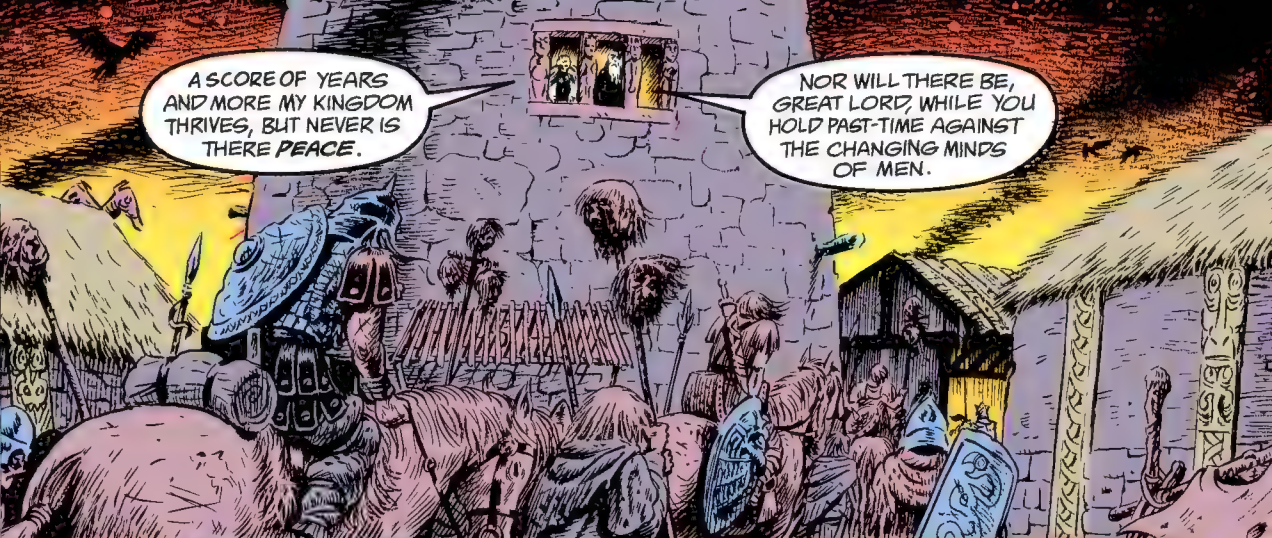
THE KING.

AND THE WORLD TURNED ON, 'TIL IN HIS NINETEENTH YEAR THEY SLAUGHTERED THIS PRINCE IN THE **STONES**--HIS BLOOD FOR THE MOTHER IN PLACE OF THE KING'S.

SNEER NOT, SCORCHED MEAT. IT WAS LORE-FUL.

THE FANATICS OF ROME STILL HARASSED MY LAND AND I NEEDED MORE TIME TO DREAM UP MY SCHEME.





A SCORE OF YEARS  
AND MORE MY KINGDOM  
THRIVES, BUT NEVER IS  
THERE PEACE.

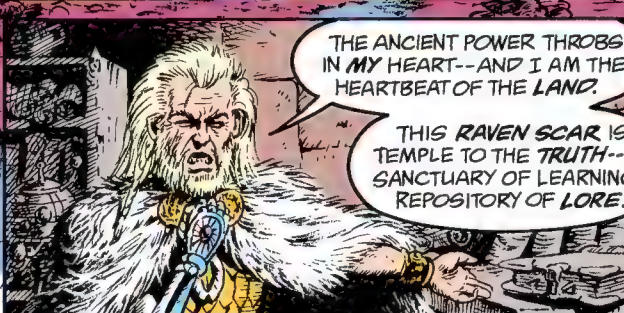
NOR WILL THERE BE,  
GREAT LORD, WHILE YOU  
HOLD PAST-TIME AGAINST  
THE CHANGING MINDS  
OF MEN.



YOU ARE A  
CRAVEN FOOL.  
POOR, FEEBLE  
MERLIN.




THIS I HAVE BUILT  
WITH FORCE OF WILL--  
THIS HAVE I HELD  
WITH MAGIC.




THE ANCIENT POWER THROBS  
IN MY HEART--AND I AM THE  
HEARTBEAT OF THE LAND.

THIS RAVEN SCAR IS  
TEMPLE TO THE TRUTH--A  
SANCTUARY OF LEARNING,  
REPOSITORY OF LORE.



NO, IT IS NOUGHT BUT A FUTILE  
BOLT-HOLE--A BELEAGUERED  
LAIR, GIVING VAIN SHELTER  
TO THE BEASTS OF  
ANACHRONISM.



THE DRAGON CURLING IN THE BODY  
OF THE EARTH IS OLD NOW--BREATH  
COOLED, SCALES FADED, TEETH  
GROUND DOWN.

YOU RULE HERE  
FIVE CENTURIES  
TOO LATE.





READ THE SIGNS  
IN THE SKY, GREAT **MAGUS**.  
THE LABYRINTHINE BULL  
BACKS FROM THE SPHERE  
OF INFLUENCE AS THE  
PISCAN FISH BRINGS  
WATERS TO COVER  
THE EARTH.

THE **FISH**--SYMBOL  
OF THE SUN PRINCE,  
JESUS.



TRAVEL NOT THREE DAYS  
EAST FROM THIS DROWNING ISLAND AND  
FIND **ALL** THE LAND BOWED TO  
HIS BLOODY PRIESTS. HERE  
TOO IT WILL BE SO.



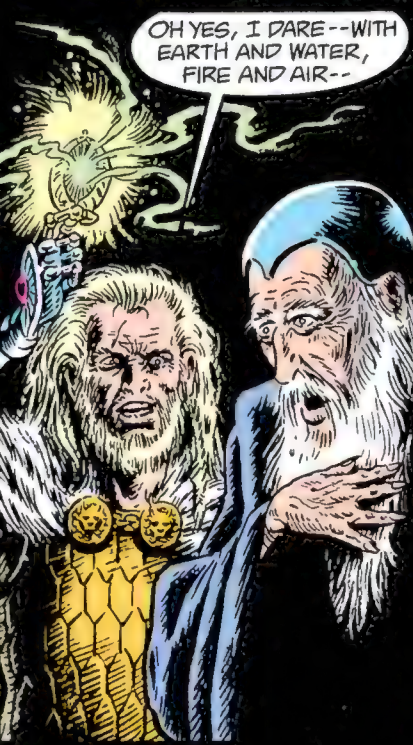
OUR POWER IS FLED BACK TO OTHER-  
WORLD WITH THE **FAERIES**, RUN WILD  
IN THE MOUNTAINS WITH THE LAST  
**DYRE-WOLFS**, DEAD BY THE  
ROMAN'S SWORDS IN THE **DRUIDS'**  
SACRED GROVES--

BURIED BY THE  
**ONE-GOD'S**  
VICTORY.

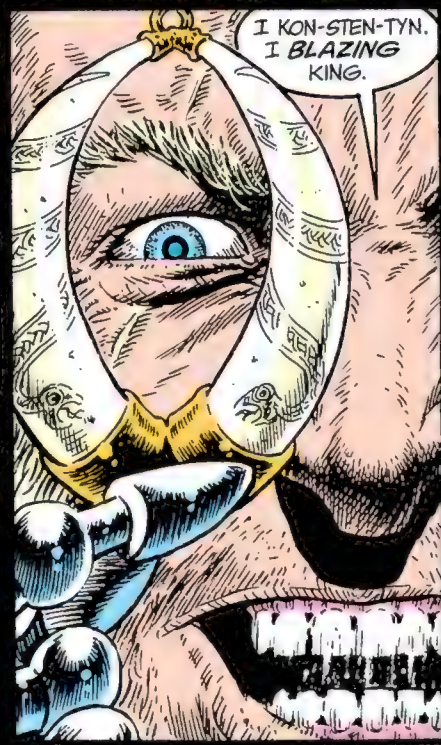


NOT **SO**, GREAT MERLIN --THAT  
POWER RESTS IN **ME**, AS YOU  
SHALL SURELY STAY TO SEE.

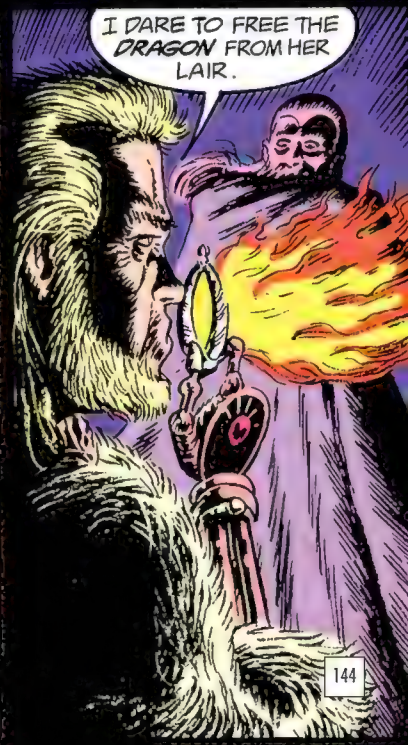
YOU  
**DARE...**



OH YES, I DARE--WITH  
EARTH AND WATER,  
FIRE AND AIR--



I KON-STEN-TYN.  
I BLAZING  
KING.



I DARE TO FREE THE  
**DRAGON** FROM HER  
LAIR.





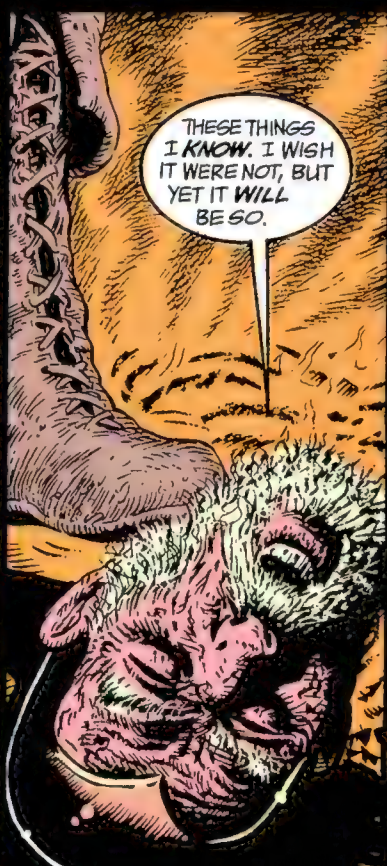
ALL THAT I  
SUFFER IS ALL  
I DESERVE.

AACH!



BUT THOUGH  
YOU TORTMENT ME  
A **THOUSAND**  
YEARS, THE FUTURE  
SHALL NOT  
SWERVE.

UURRGH!



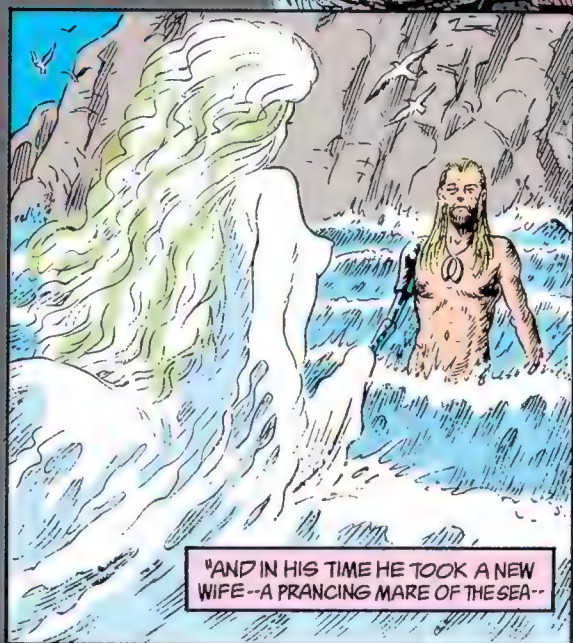
THESE THINGS  
I **KNOW**. I WISH  
IT WERE NOT, BUT  
YET IT **WILL**  
BE SO.



SING ON THEN,  
YOU BASTARD  
KNOW-IT-ALL.

FOR ALL HIS  
RAGING HERO'S IRE,  
GREAT KON-STEN-TYN  
WAS TROUBLED--

--AND TROUBLED  
HE, YET NINETEEN YEARS  
IN DARK-BROWED RAVEN  
SCAR, WHILE ROUND THE  
BORDERS OF HIS LAND  
THE PRIESTLY FOMENT  
BUBBLED.



"AND IN HIS TIME HE TOOK A NEW  
WIFE--A PRANCING MARE OF THE SEA--



"--WHO LEFT HIM A FOAL, THEN RAN  
FROM THE SHOAL--GLORIOUS,  
SILVER AND FREE."



"IN THIS TIME THE WISEST CAME,  
DRAWN BY HIS FAME, TO BRING  
HIM KNOWLEDGE AND ART.  
MOORS, GREEKS, THE HINDI  
AND SOME FROM BABYLON,  
MORE RACES THAN HAVE A  
NAME CONVERSED TOGETHER  
AS ONE.

"YET HE TENDED THE  
LAND IN THE PROPER  
WAY-- FOOD GREW  
IN ITS SEASON.

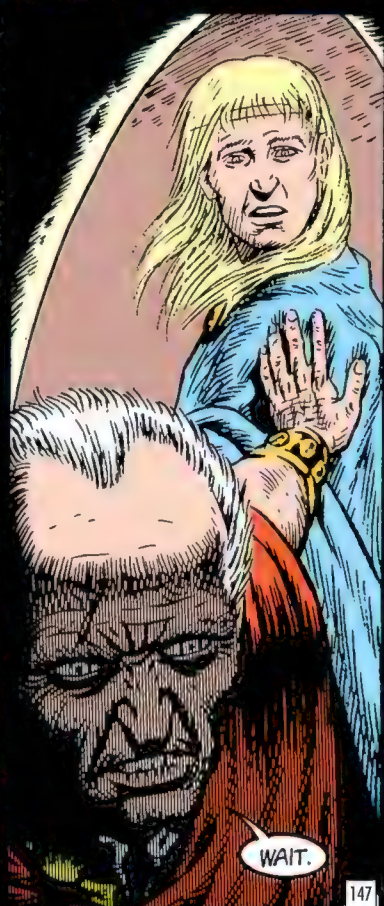
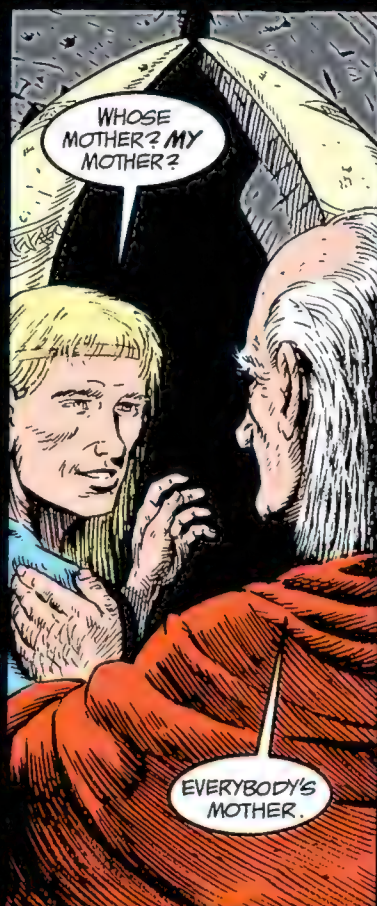
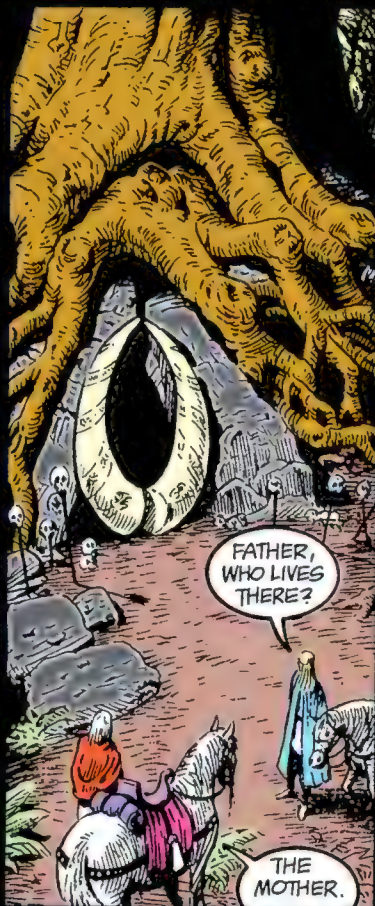
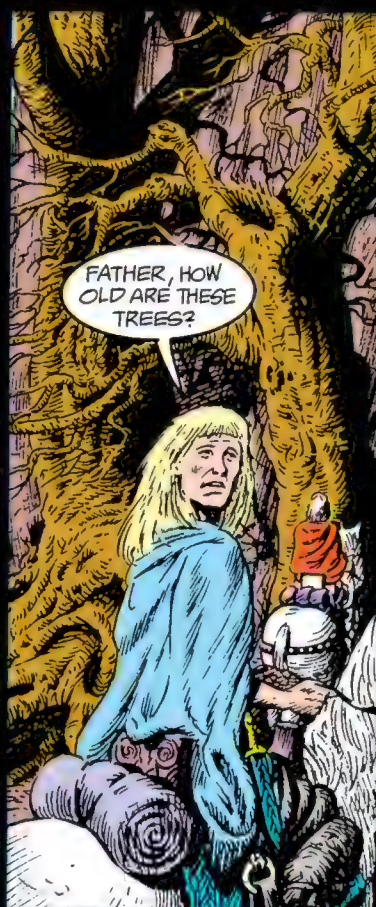
"YET HE TENDED THE *STONES*  
ON THE PROPER DAY-- FOR THE  
DRAGON RULED HIS REASON.

"YET HE TENDED THE MOTHER,  
*CERRIDWEN*, PALE IN THE SACRED  
GROVE-- FOR HER SISTERS HE  
LAID FEASTS OF THE SKULL-  
SHAVEN PRIESTS, FOR MANY  
THERE WERE AND THEY DIED  
IN DROVES.

"HIS SON SLEW MANY, FOR HE WAS A  
HERO. AND HE SLEW MORE, FOR HE  
WAS A *MIGHTY* HERO-- BUT FOR EACH  
THAT DIED A HUNDRED CAME,  
SPAWNED IN THE NESTS OF THE CITY-MEN.

AND SO ONCE  
MORE IT WAS TIME FOR  
THE WHEEL TO TURN--  
FOR THE KING TO DIE  
SO THE KING MIGHT  
BE BORN.









SO, KON-STEN-TYN--  
IS THE TIME SO QUICKLY  
FLED? HAVE YOU COME  
BACK TO ME?



YES, LADY, I HAVE--IF YOU  
DECREE IT SO.

ALREADY ONE SON  
HAVE I SENT YOU IN MY  
PLACE. **ANOTHER**  
WAITS WITHOUT.



IF YOU WILL GIVE THE KNOWLEDGE  
HOW IT MAY BE DONE, I WILL  
REMAIN IN THIS FADING WORLD  
FOR ONE MORE REVOLUTION OF  
THE HEAVENLY CASTLE--AND  
YET DEFEAT THESE  
BARBAROUS PRIESTS.



SO YOU WOULD KNOW, WOULD  
YOU? YOU WOULD SERVE,  
WOULD YOU?

YES.



AM I YOUR MOTHER?

YES.

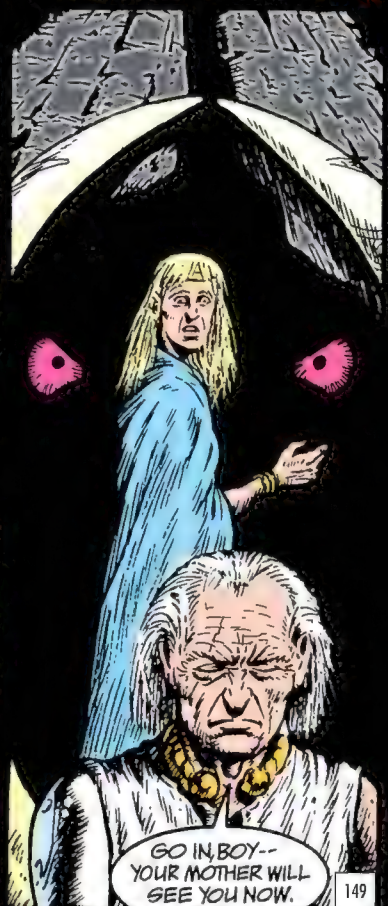
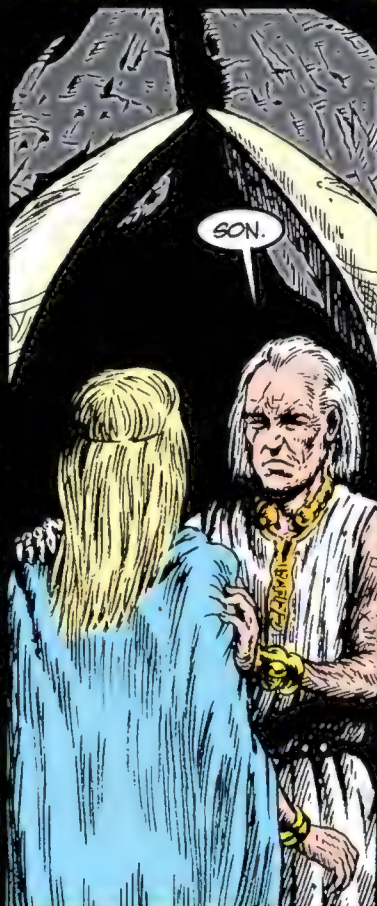
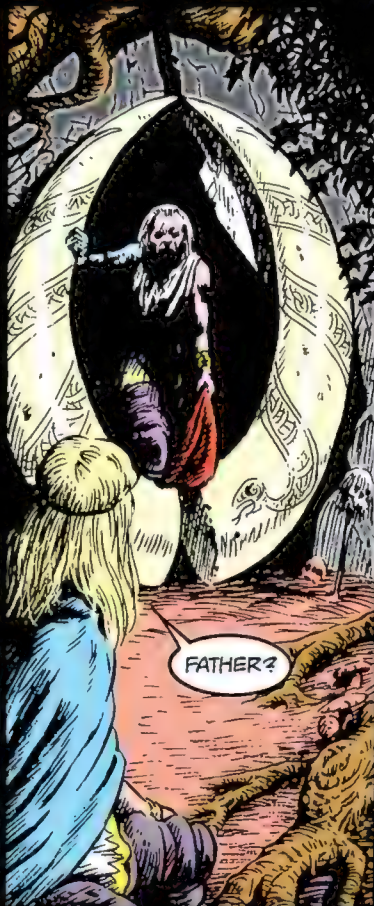
DO YOU  
LOVE ME?

YES.



THEN  
LOVE ME,  
KING.

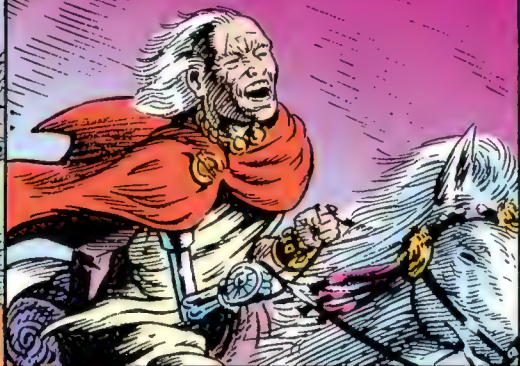








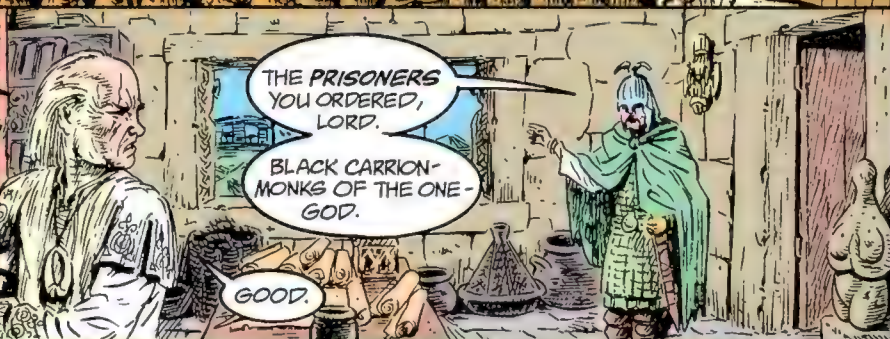
THUS THRICE-BORN KON-STEN-TYN  
CAME BACK TO RAVENSCAR, HIS  
VEINS AFIRE WITH DRAGON-FLAME,  
WILD LAUGHTER ON HIS BREATH.



"WHAT A JOKE IT WOULD  
BE, WHAT A FABULOUS JEST--  
SO THE ART COULD SURVIVE,  
THOUGH THE DRAGON REST."



YES, WHAT  
IS IT?



THE PRISONERS  
YOU ORDERED,  
LORD.

BLACK CARRION-  
MONKS OF THE ONE-  
GOD.

GOOD.



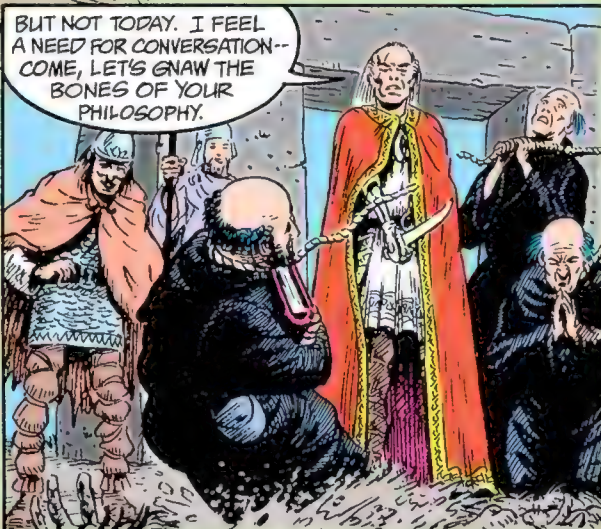
SO YOU ARE PETROC,  
SAVER OF SOULS.  
sniff



I SMELL  
NO FEAR.



HAPPILY  
I DIE FOR  
JESUS.



BUT NOT TODAY. I FEEL  
A NEED FOR CONVERSATION--  
COME, LET'S GNAW THE  
BONES OF YOUR  
PHILOSOPHY.



KILL ALL OF THESE AND  
FEED THE SOW--THIS  
ONE I TAKE WITH ME.





I SEE, PETROC, THAT YOU'RE A PIOUS MAN--A **LEARNED** MAN.

I SERVE THE **ONE-GOD**, I FOLLOW HIS LAW.



THESE LAWS--THEY ARE THE CHILDREN'S TALES LOCKED IN **THAT** MILDEWED BOOK?

BLASPHEMER! THESE ARE THE WORDS OF **GOD**.



HAH! HE KNOWS BUT LITTLE THEN, IF THIS IS ALL HE HAS TO SAY.

JUST **ONE** PALTRY BOOK?



WHY, I HAVE THOUSANDS, IN AS MANY TONGUES, WHICH SPEAK OF MYSTERIES SO OLD THAT WHEN THE FIRST WERE SCRIBED, THE EARTH WAS BARELY WEANED.

THE **BABBLE** OF **DEVILS**--LIES OF **DEMONS**.



IN THE NAME OF THE **FATHER** AND OF THE **SUN**--IN THE NAME OF THE **ONE-GOD**...

**ONE-GOD**, FOOL! AND WHAT OF THE **MOTHER**? THERE IS A **FIRMAMENT** OF GODS AND ALL HAVE MORE WISDOM THAN **YOURS**.



HEATHEN. HERETIC. SERPENT WORSHIPER.

GAH! GRUWAAAH!

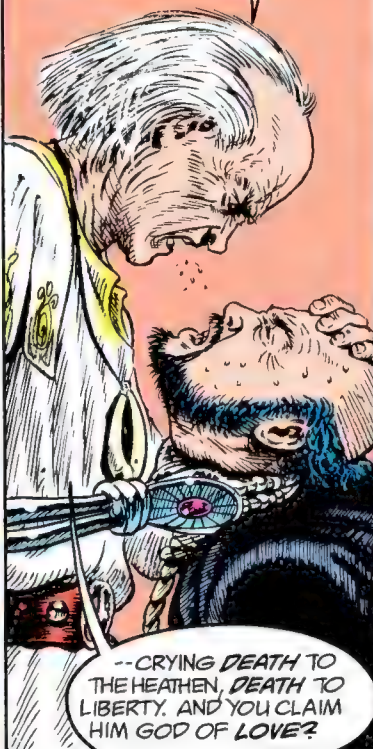
BE STILL, FOOL. YOU KNOW NOT OF WHAT YOU SPEAK.



IGNORANT, IGNORANT MAN. IN YOUR CRASS OBEISANCE YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THE *PURPOSE* OF GODS. BLINDED BY THE GLARE OF YOUR LORD YOU HAVE YET PLACED YOURSELVES BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND THE WORLD OF MAGIC.



YOU HAVE CUT THEM OFF FROM THE *EARTH* WHICH IS THEIR *LIFE*. YOUR JEALOUS GOD RIDES ON A WAVE OF FEAR--



--CRYING *DEATH* TO THE HEATHEN, *DEATH* TO LIBERTY. AND YOU CLAIM HIM GOD OF LOVE?

SO, MONK, WILL I SHOW YOU THE LIGHT OF *TRUTH*? WILL I LET THE DRAGON MELT YOUR EYES IN THEIR SOCKETS AND SEND YOU BLIND TO *HELL*?

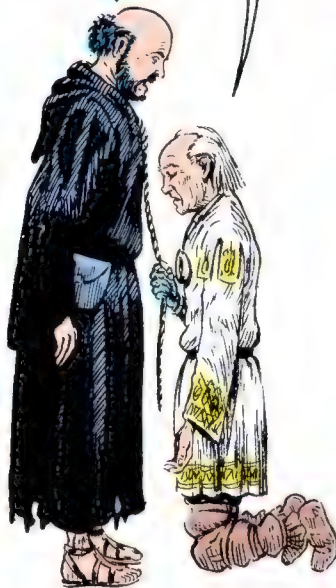


HA HA HA, DO NOT SHITE YOURSELF, MONK. I SHALL NOT HURT YOU--FOR I HAVE A MIND TO BE A *CHRISTIAN* KING.



I SHALL TURN FROM THE OLD WAYS, BURN THESE HERETICAL WORKS. I WILL SUBMIT TO THE WILL OF ONE-GOD AND BRING MY PEOPLE TO HIS WAYS.

WHY?



BECAUSE I CANNOT STAND AGAINST THAT WHICH MUST PREVAIL. BECAUSE ALL MEN CRAVE POWER AND ALL MEN FEAR WOMAN--



--AND I AM A MAN, LIKE YOU, WHO WOULD ABUSE HER.



"AND THE MONK, PETROC, GAINED GREAT GLORY IN THE CHURCHES OF GLAS-TYN-BYRG AND ROME BY SUBDUING AND CONVERTING THE HEATHEN, KON-STEN-TYN.

"AND THE HOLY ABBOT KON-STEN-TYN CAUSED THE GREAT STONES TO BE PULLED DOWN AND BUILT INTO TEMPLES FOR THE FATHER, BUT IN THE MORTAR WAS THE BLOOD OF MOTHERS SONS.

"AND THESE TEMPLES WERE BUILT ON THE DRAGON PLACES--SO THAT THE WORSHIP WAS NOT WASTED.

"AND IN THE STONES, THE FACES OF THE ANCIENT.

"AND KON-STEN-TYN THE CUNNING MAN CAUSED GROVES OF SACRED OAK FELLED FOR ROOF-TIMBER--SO THAT THEIR BLOOD-SAP WOULD BE AS INCENSE FOR THE SECRET SHRINE.

"AND NO PRIEST OF THAT EMPIRE UNDERSTOOD, EVEN DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES TO COME, THAT THEIR ONE-GOD HAD NOT CONQUERED BUT HAD BEEN SEDUCED.

AND THOUGH THEIR POWER MAY LAST TEN THOUSAND YEARS, STILL THEY MUST FAIL TO BE COMPLETE, WHILE WRITHES THE DRAGON BENEATH THEIR FEET.



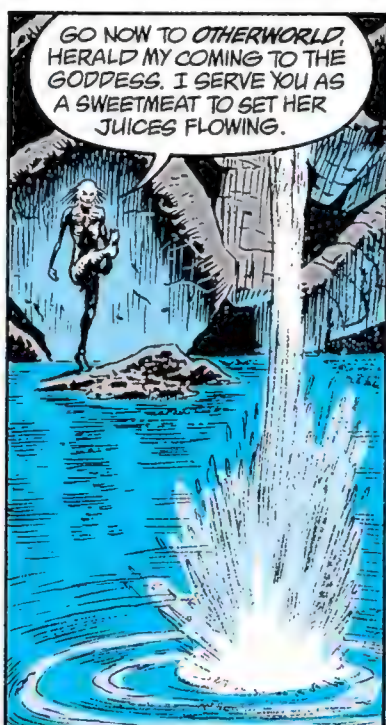


THAT IS ALL. IT IS SUNG. GAAH, MY THROAT IS *PARCHED* NOW, KING, HONOR YOUR PROMISE, RELEASE ME TO MY REST.



VERY WELL--THOUGH YOUR SONG WAS A POOR THING, LET IT NOT BE SAID THAT I WAS A *CRUEL* OR *DECEITFUL* MAN.

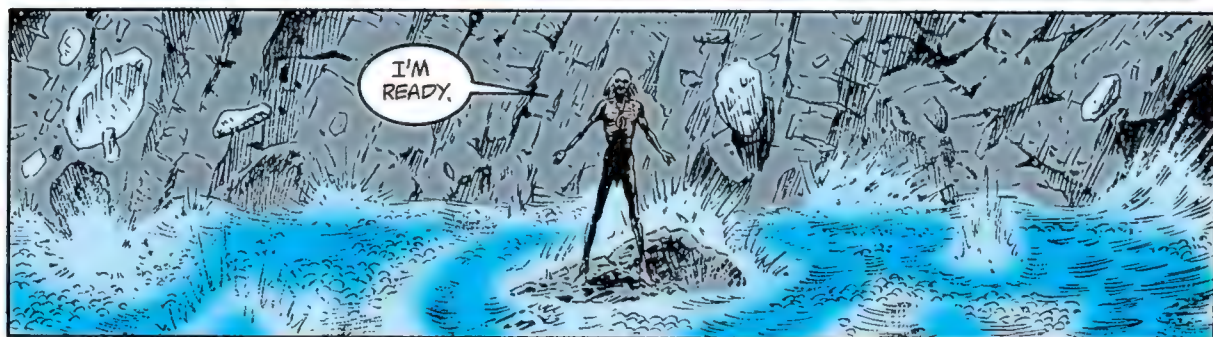
THANK YOU, GREAT MERLIN, FOR MY ENTERTAINING LIFE.



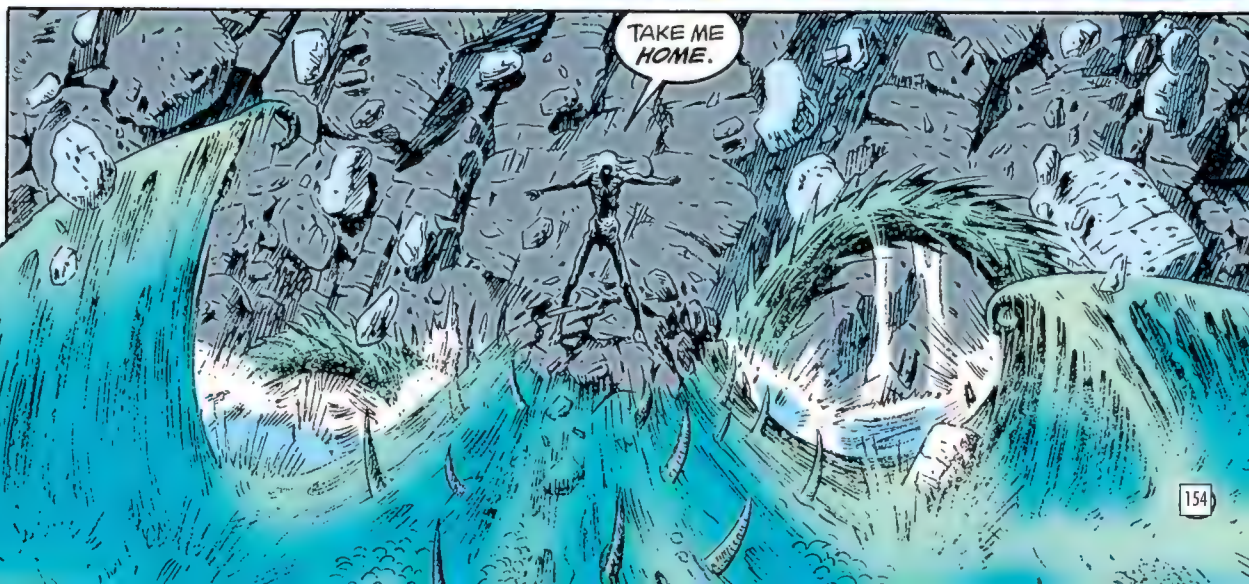
GO NOW TO *OTHERWORLD*, HERALD MY COMING TO THE GODDESS. I SERVE YOU AS A SWEETMEAT TO SET HER JUICES FLOWING.



COME THEN, *LADY*--

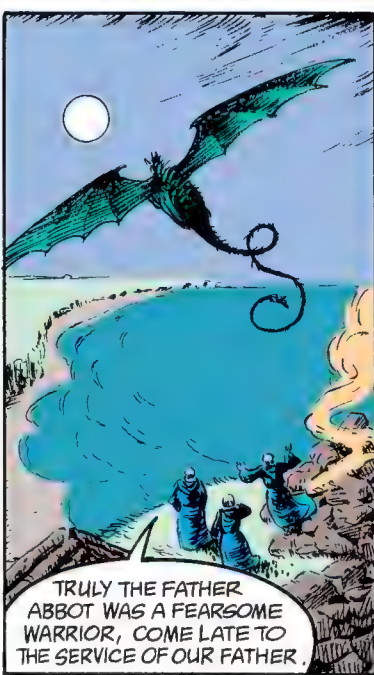
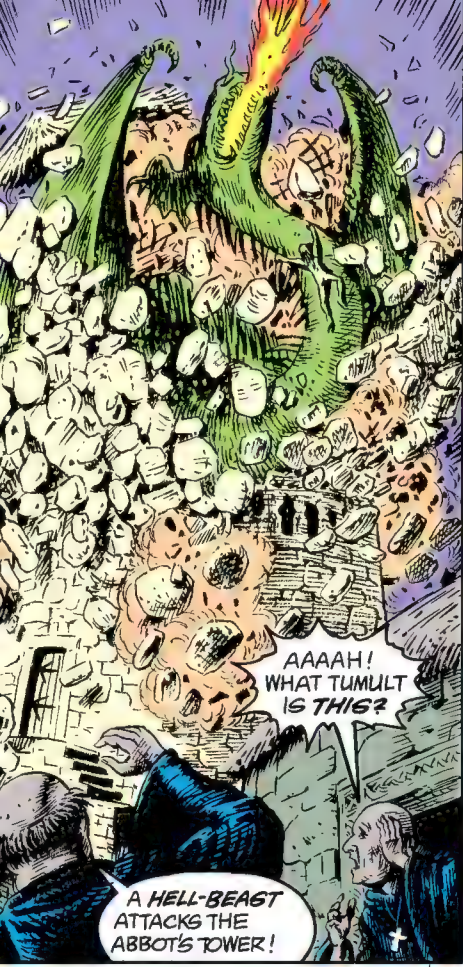


I'M READY.

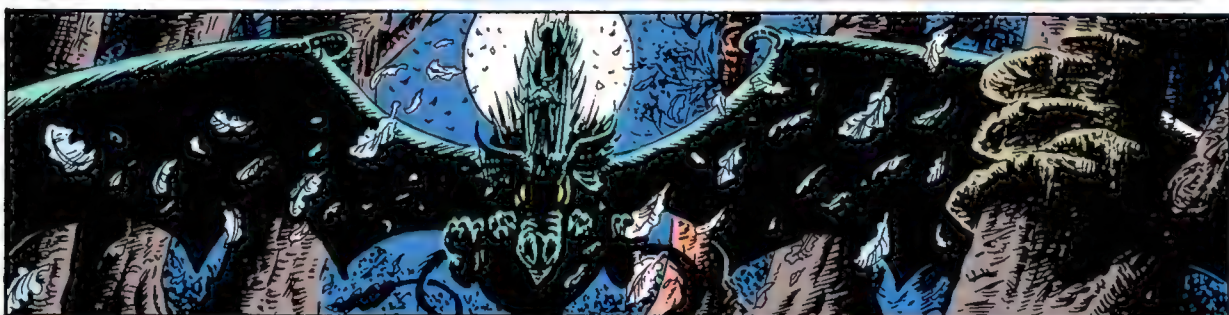


TAKE ME HOME.









MOTHER, I HAVE COME.  
ALL THE MAGIC HAS  
BEEN DONE.

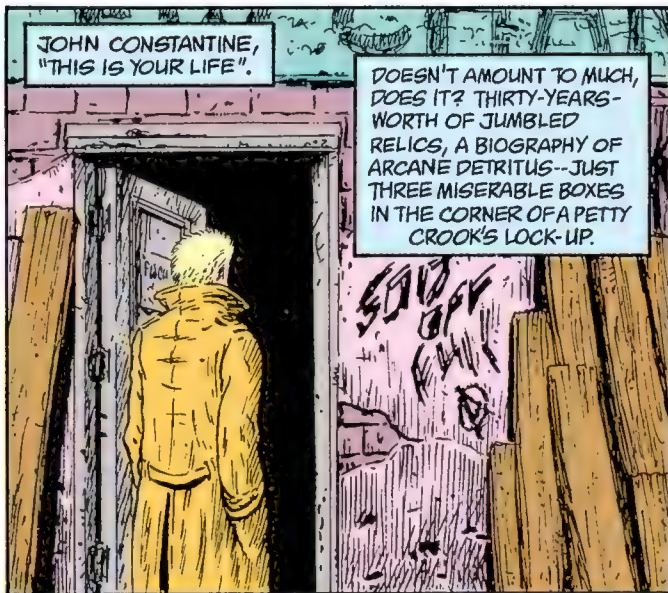


I DID IT. I,  
KON-STEN-TYN--  
ME.



"THE KING THAT WAS, AND  
NOW WILL EVER BE."



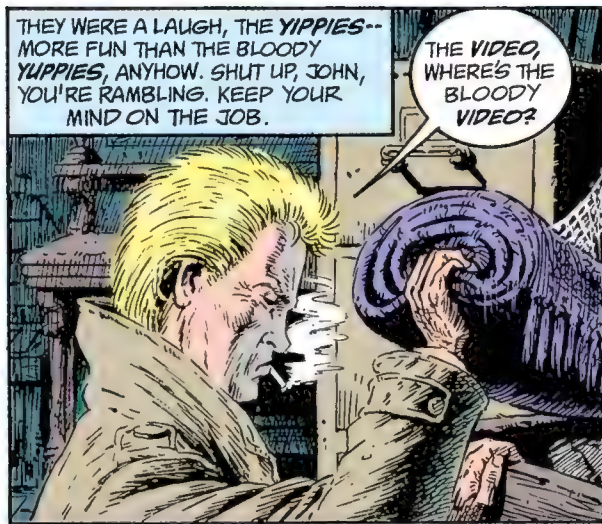


JOHN CONSTANTINE,  
"THIS IS YOUR LIFE".

DOESN'T AMOUNT TO MUCH,  
DOES IT? THIRTY-YEARS-  
WORTH OF JUMBLED  
RELICS, A BIOGRAPHY OF  
ARCANE DETRITUS--JUST  
THREE MISERABLE BOXES  
IN THE CORNER OF A PETTY  
CROOK'S LOCK-UP.

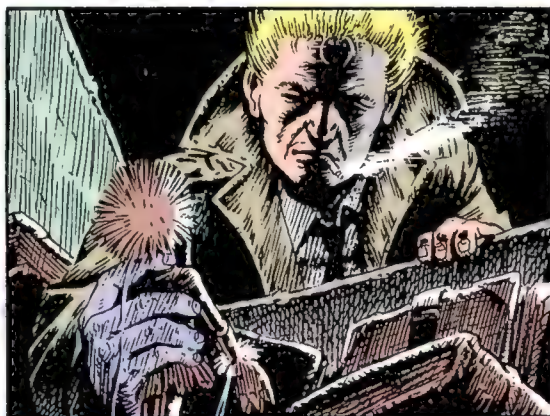


JESUS, IS IT THIRTY YEARS ALREADY?  
MUST BE, THIS IS 1982. TEMPUS BLOODY  
FUGIT, EH? HAH--NEVER TRUST ANYONE  
OVER THIRTY--THAT'S WHAT JERRY RUBIN  
SAID.

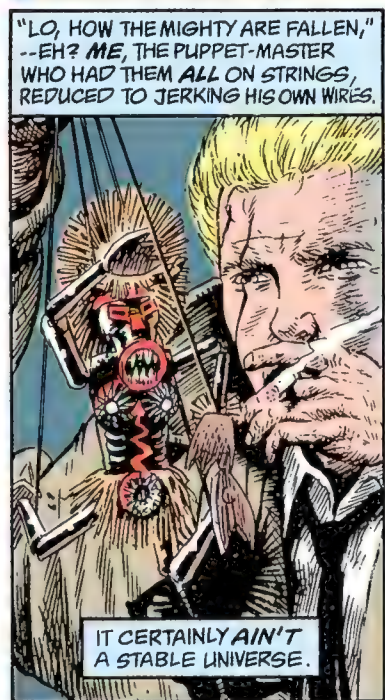


THEY WERE A LAUGH, THE YIPPIES--  
MORE FUN THAN THE BLOODY  
YIPPIES, ANYHOW. SHUT UP, JOHN,  
YOU'RE RAMBLING. KEEP YOUR  
MIND ON THE JOB.

THE VIDEO,  
WHERE'S THE  
BLOODY  
VIDEO?

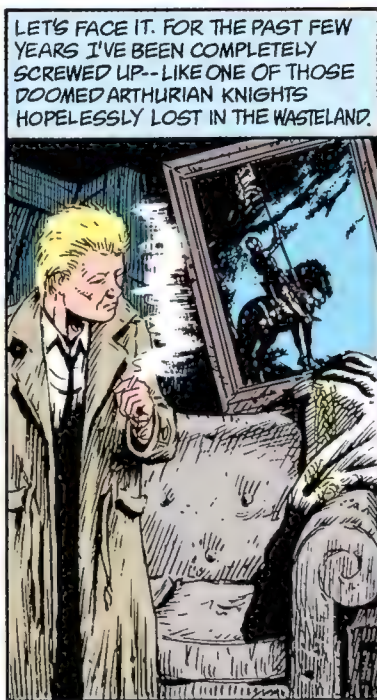


IT'S GETTING TO BE AN OBSESSION, A SORT OF  
MINDGAME I'M PLAYING WITH MYSELF. I'VE TURNED IT  
INTO A SYMBOL--SOME KIND OF HOLY GRAIL OF SELF-  
RESPECT WHICH WILL KEEP ME OUT OF RAVENSCAR.



"LO, HOW THE MIGHTY ARE FALLEN,"  
--EH? ME, THE PUPPET-MASTER  
WHO HAD THEM ALL ON STRINGS,  
REDUCED TO JERKING HIS OWN WIRES.

IT CERTAINLY AIN'T  
A STABLE UNIVERSE.



LET'S FACE IT. FOR THE PAST FEW  
YEARS I'VE BEEN COMPLETELY  
SCREWED UP--LIKE ONE OF THOSE  
DOOMED ARTHURIAN KNIGHTS  
HOPELESSLY LOST IN THE WASTELAND.



THE WRITING WAS ON THE WALL  
ALL ALONG, I S'POSE--NEWCASTLE  
JUST UNDERLINED IT. I WAS TOO  
BUSY BEING KING OF MY CASTLE  
TO SEE HELL SNEAKING UP ON  
ME. NOW I NEED...

WHAT...?  
WHAT DO I  
NEED?



I NEED TO FIND THAT **TAPE**. I NEED TO LET THAT **MONEY-HUNGRY BASTARD, GOBSMACK**, PUT IT OUT IN FRONT OF THE **WORLD**.

WHERE IS IT?

I MEANT IT THEN -- AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR ME TO RECOGNIZE AND HOLD ON TO THE PART OF ME THAT STILL MEANS IT NOW.

NOT FOR FAME OR FORTUNE. NOT BECAUSE IT'S **GREAT ART**, OR **ICONOCLASTIC**, BUT BECAUSE IT'S **MY ART**. I DID IT. I SAID IT--AND I HAVE A RIGHT TO MAKE MYSELF HEARD.

THESE ARE TROUBLED TIMES. AND IN TROUBLED TIMES IT'S EVERYBODY'S DUTY TO KEEP FAITH WITH THEMSELVES--ENNIT?

AAAAH!

'LLO JOHN, ANY LUCK?

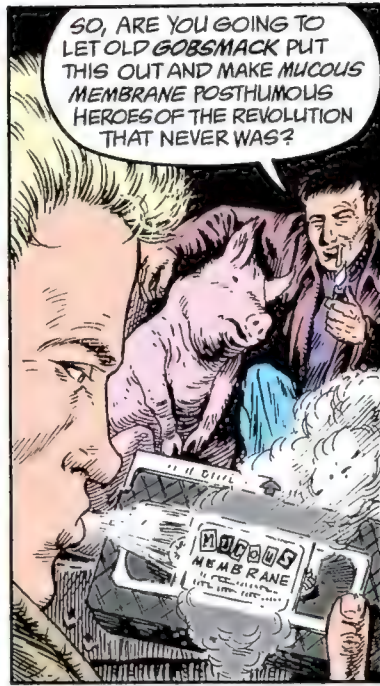
CHAS, YOU FRIGGIN' **MANIAC**. WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT **SODDIN' PIG**?

I NEARLY DROPPED ME LOAD.

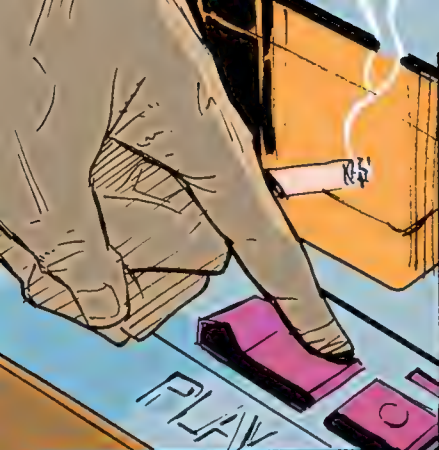
**SORRY, MATE**. COME TO THINK OF IT, THAT'S HOW I GOT IT. **LORRY SHED ITS LOAD--KNOW WHAT I MEAN?**

WHAT A BLEEDIN' MESS. 'ENT YOU FOUND IT YET?









Venus of the hardsell  
MUCOUS  
MEMBRANE  
constantine/lester  
'snot music 1978  
video by  
Dean Motter

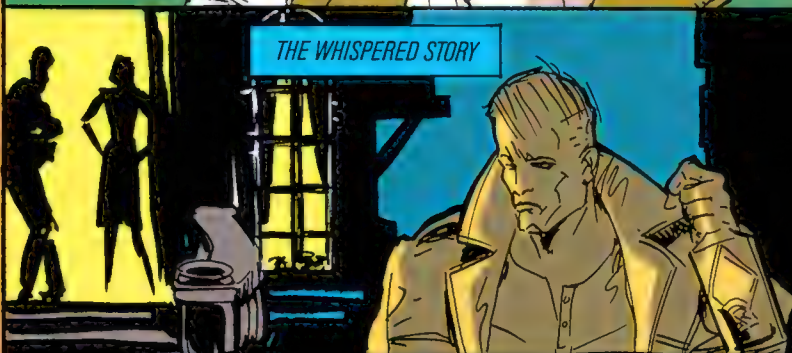
LOVE ADVENTURE DEATH AND GLORY



THE SHORT GOODBYE



THE WHISPERED STORY



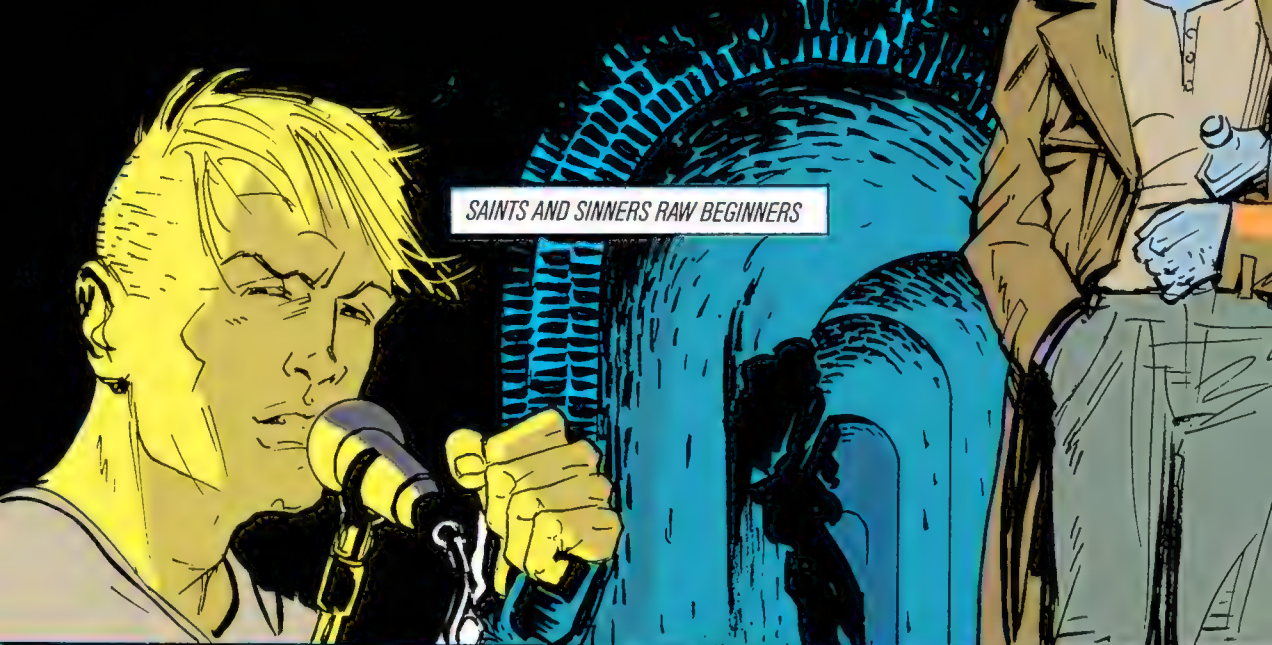
ONE LAST GLANCE AT THE CHAMELEON DANCE



AND INTO THE DARK ACROSS THE PARK  
I AIN'T NO MARK FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL  
(SAY IT)  
I AIN'T NO MARK FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL





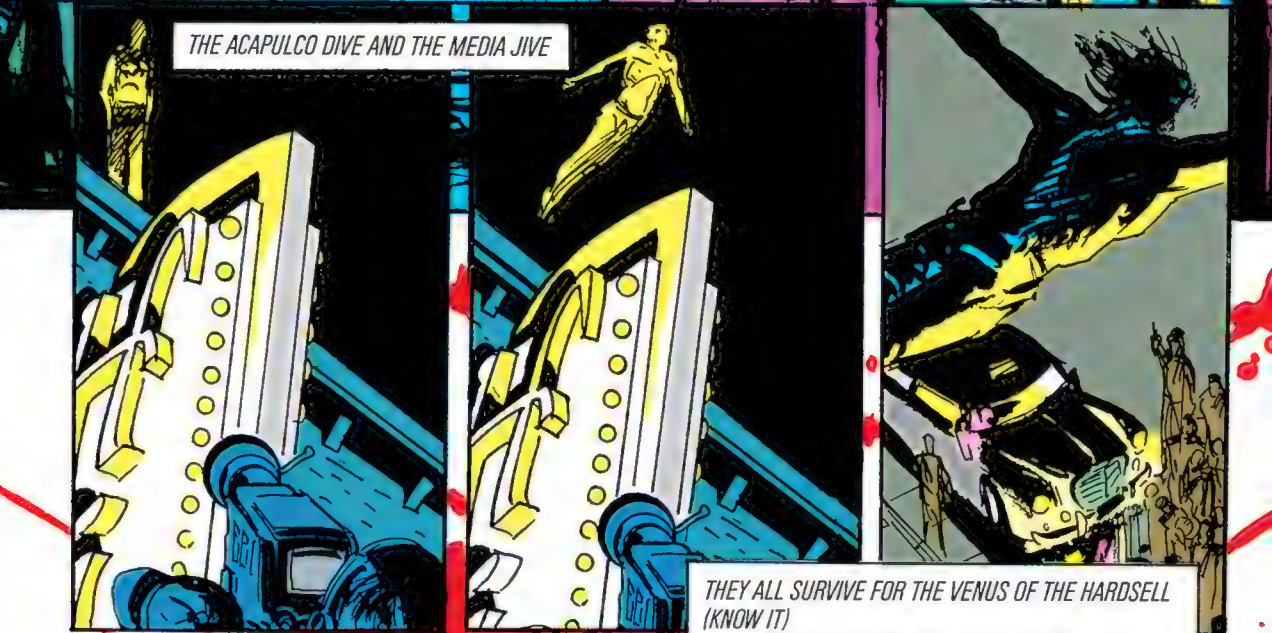


SAINTS AND SINNERS RAW BEGINNERS



LIPSTICK TRACES AND TV DINNERS

CIGARSMOKE BARS AND EXPENSIVE NEW CARS




THE ACAPULCO DIVE AND THE MEDIA JIVE

THEY ALL SURVIVE FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL  
(KNOW IT)  
THEY ALL SURVIVE FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL








EMPTY GRAVES AND SHALLOW HEADS  
SHALLOW SMILES AND EMPTY BEDS  
BETTA GET A ROOM WITHOUT A VIEW  
SAIL OUT OF SIGHT OF LAND

MOMMA WON'T LIKE IT BUT YOU SHOULD  
TRAVEL WITH A ROUGHNECK CREW  
LISTEN OUT FOR ALL THAT'S SAID  
JUST WORRY WHEN THE HOUNDS AREN'T FED  
(GOTTA)  
WORRY WHEN THE HOUNDS AREN'T FED



'COS ONE MUTT YAPS AND THE PACK STARTS BAYING  
BLOOD FOR THE GODS IT'S CHEAPER THAN PRAYING

SOLDIER-BOYS DIE BUT SUPERMAN STILL FLIES  
VIOLENT DAYS—IT'S A PERMANENT CRAZE  
IT NEVER PAYS TO LOVE THE VENUS OF THE HARDELL  
(LEAVE IT)  
DON'T SCREW AROUND WITH THE VENUS OF THE HARDELL



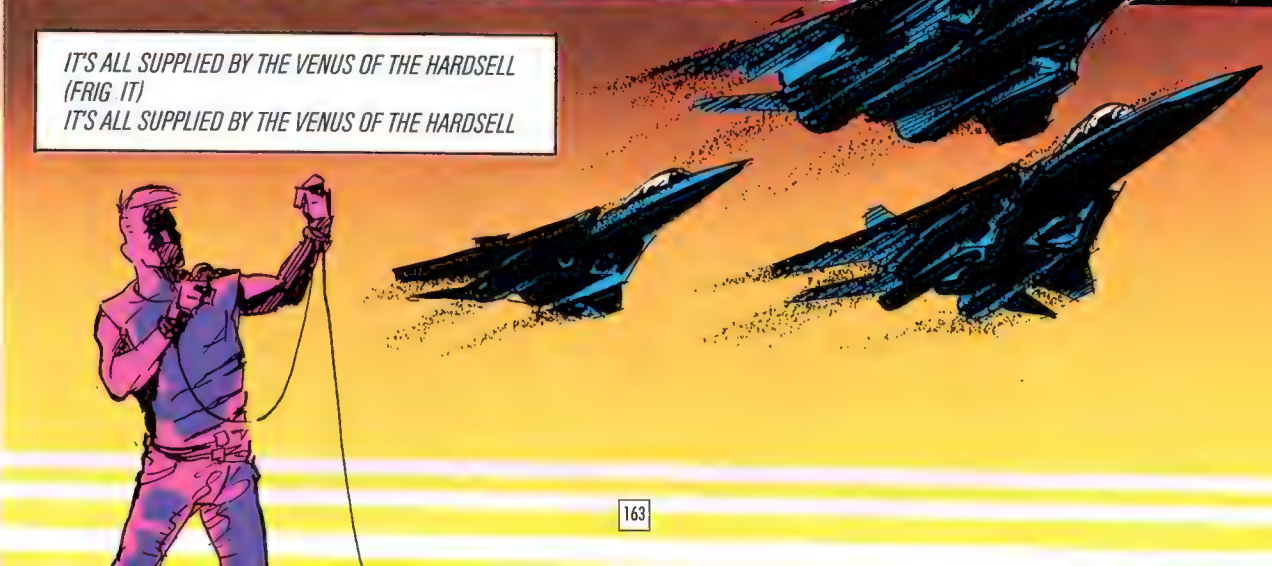


THERE'RE NEW UNIFORMS AT THE CHURCH BAZAAR  
FANATICS'VE GOT THE RISING STAR



PAST THE BILLBOARD BRIDE TROOPS THE NATIONAL PRIDE

IT'S ALL SUPPLIED BY THE VENUS OF THE HARDELL  
(FRIG IT)  
IT'S ALL SUPPLIED BY THE VENUS OF THE HARDELL





NIXON'S NAME'S LEFT ON THE MOON

WHERE APOLLO'S MASONS CALLED THE TUNE

TO CAST THEIR INFLUENCE FROM ABOVE  
AND DAMN ALL LUNACY AND LOVE

BUY  
ME

YOU KNOW THEY MADE HER THE VENUS OF THE HARDELL  
(RAPED HER)  
YOU KNOW THEY MADE HER THE VENUS OF THE HARDELL

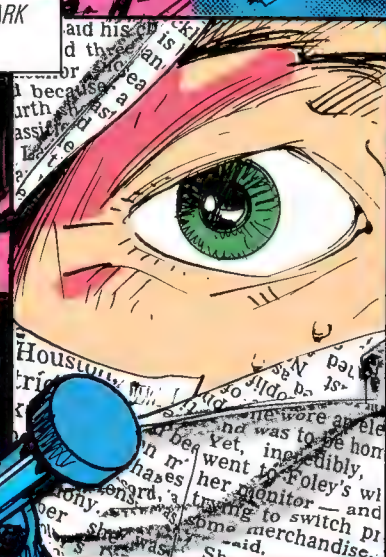




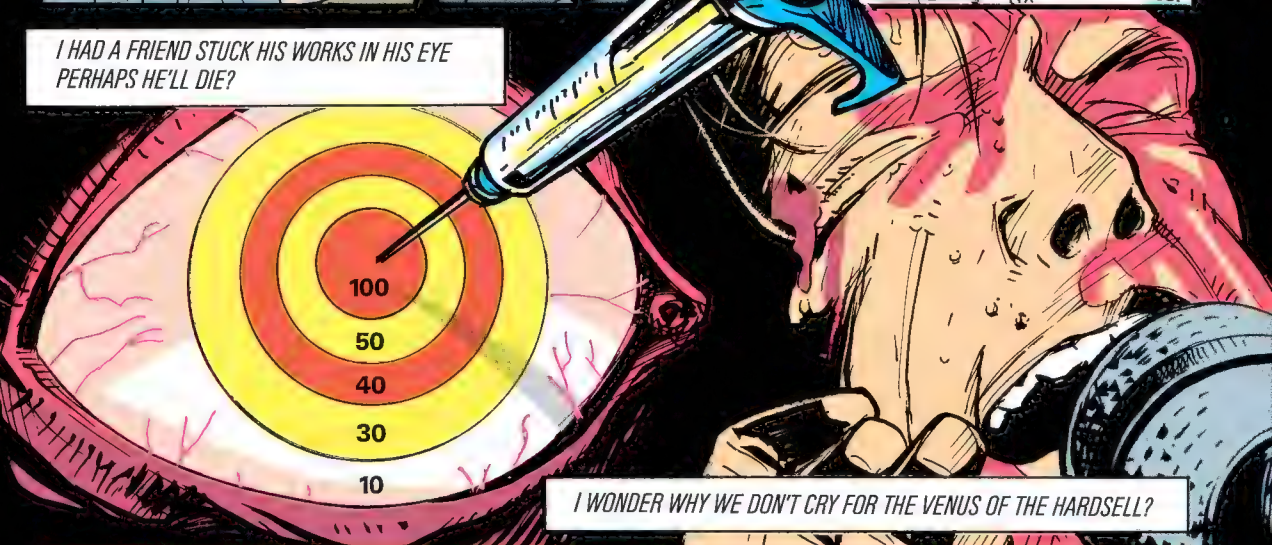
THEY'RE WINNING MOMMA AND IT'S GETTING DARK  
D'YOU THINK THERE'S TIME TO BUILD AN ARK?



TOMORROW'S A FICTION YESTERDAY A LIE



I HAD A FRIEND STUCK HIS WORKS IN HIS EYE  
PERHAPS HE'LL DIE?



I WONDER WHY WE DON'T CRY FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL?



DON'T SIGH FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL  
DON'T LIE FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL  
DON'T DIE FOR THE VENUS OF THE HARSELL

FREE HER  
AND LIVE









A PLAGUE OF SNOWFLAKES  
SWARM: A SOFT INVASION  
ON A STARVING WIND. IT'S  
TEN DEGREES BELOW,  
THIS MORNING -- COLD AS  
CHARITY.

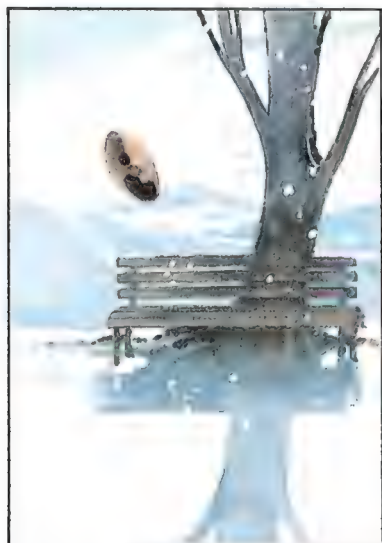
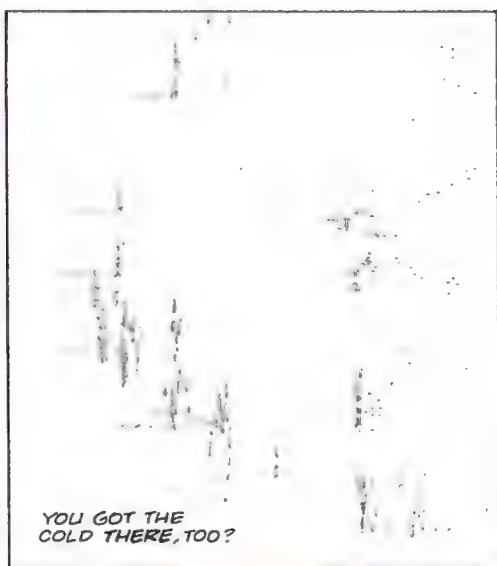
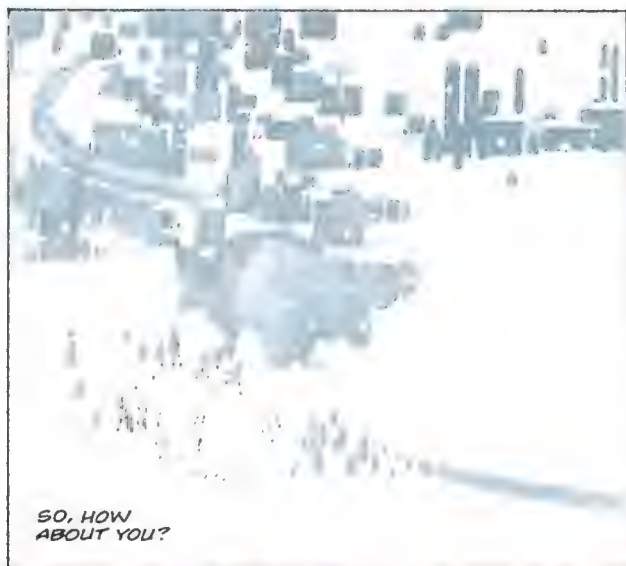
BUT SNOW IS NO BIG DEAL  
IN FENTON, ILLINOIS. THE  
SAME OLD WHITE SHIT  
DUMPS ON IT EVERY GOD-  
DAMN WINTER: IT'S JUST  
A LITTLE EARLIER THIS YEAR.

WHO CAN TELL WHY?  
POLLUTION, MAYBE...  
SCREWING THE  
WEATHER UP. COULD  
BE THE ICE-CAP'S  
CREEPING SOUTH...

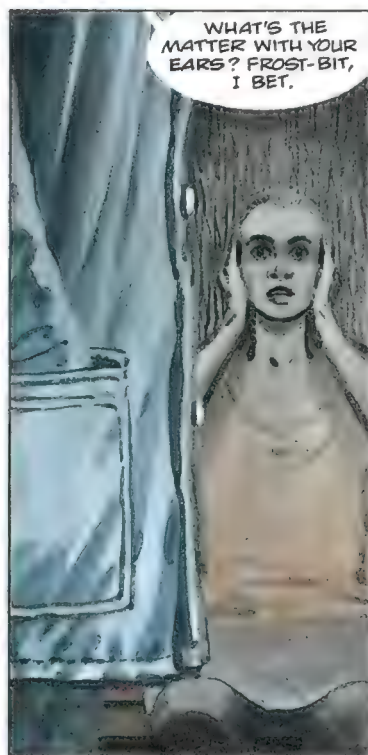
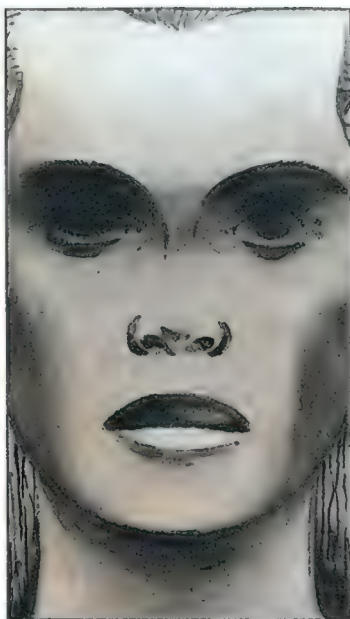
SHIT, MAYBE THE  
COUNTRY'LL SOON  
BE OVERFLOWING  
WITH REFUGEE  
CANUCKS, AS WELL  
AS ALL THE REST.

SURE, WINTER'S HARD --  
THEY'LL PISS AND MOAN,  
BUT THEY'LL GET BY OKAY  
IN FENTON. THEY GOT  
FAST FOOD, DOUBLE-  
GLAZING, SNOW TIRES,  
BLOWERS AND PLOWS...

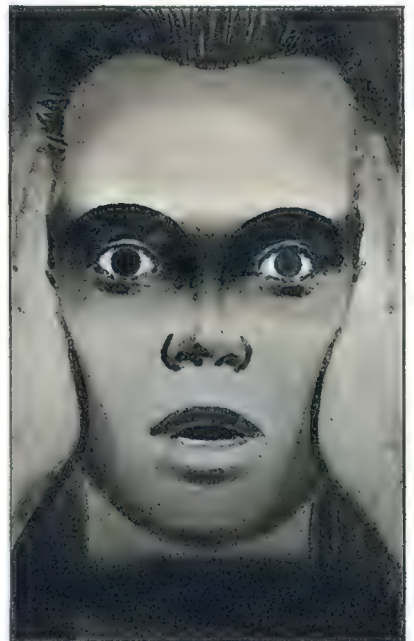
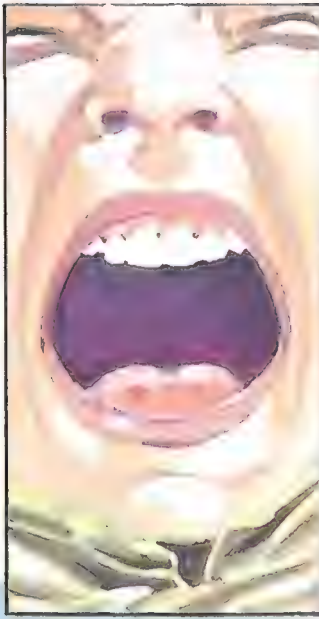








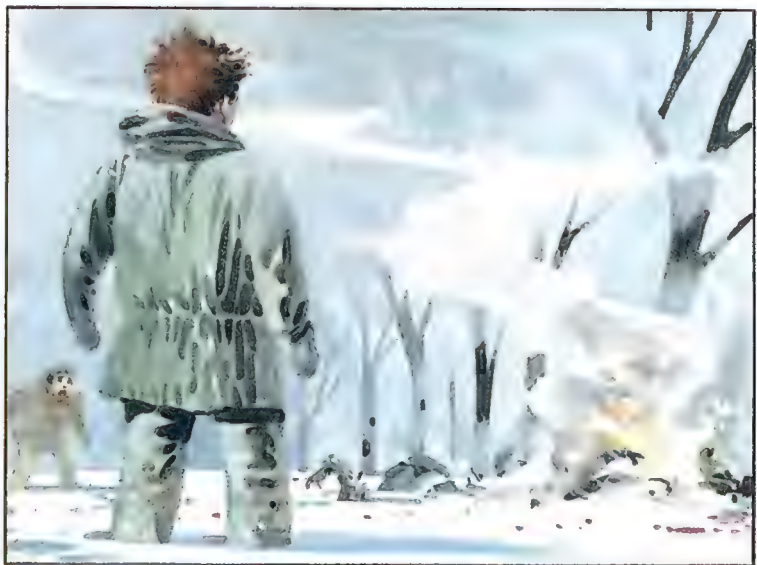




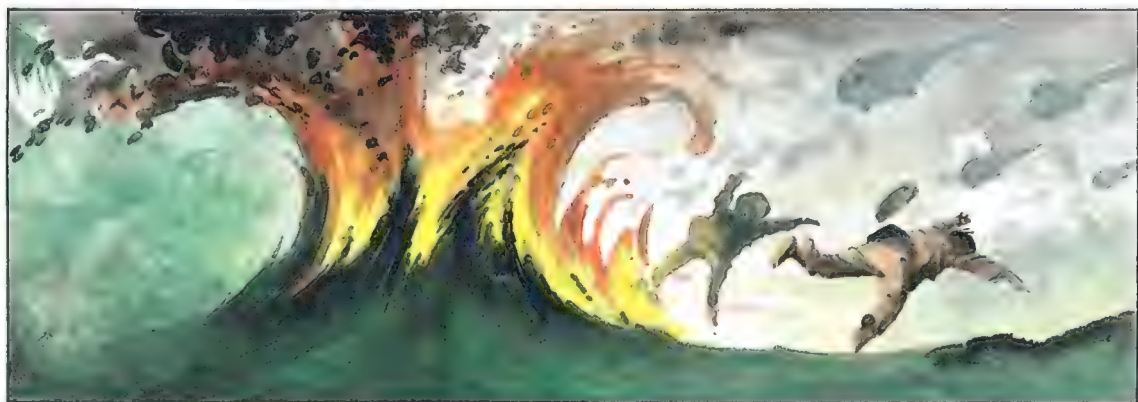
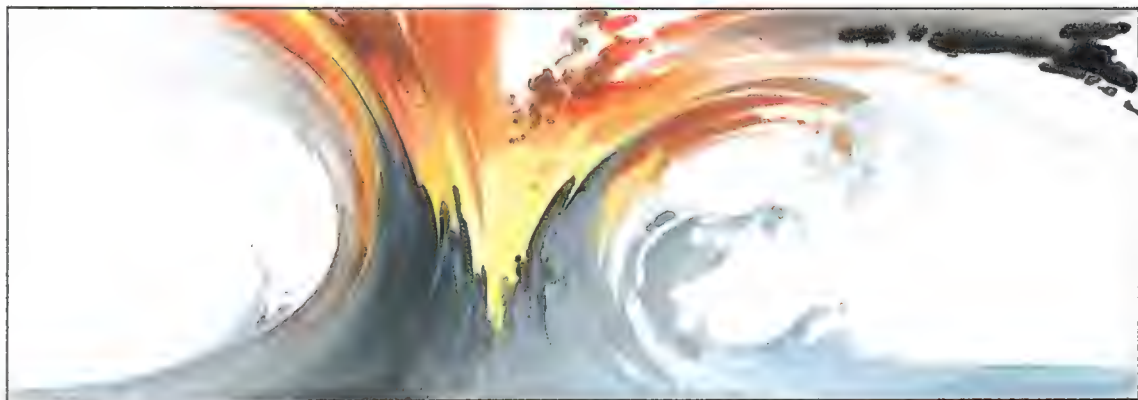








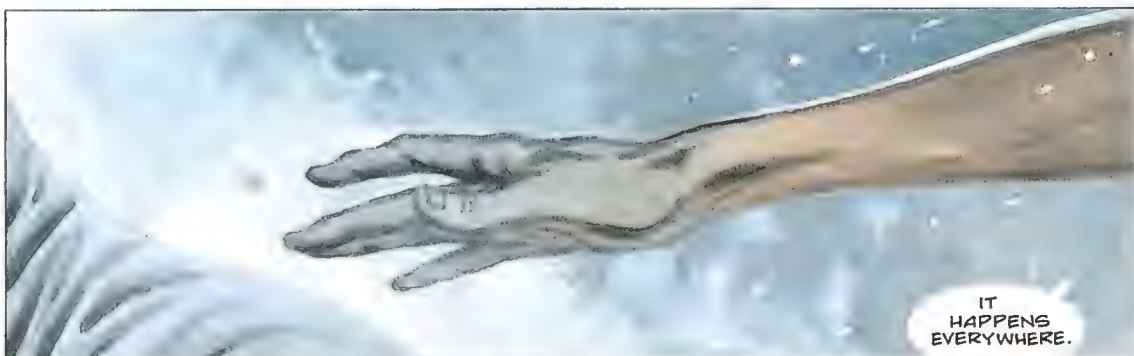








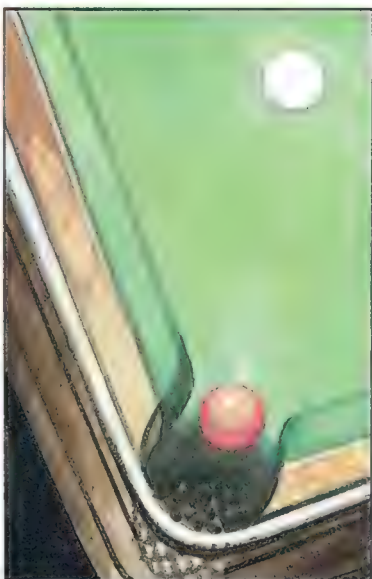
# THE HORRORIST



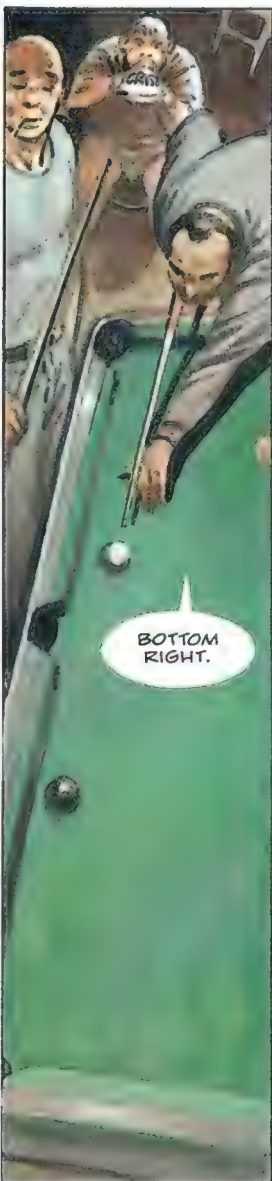
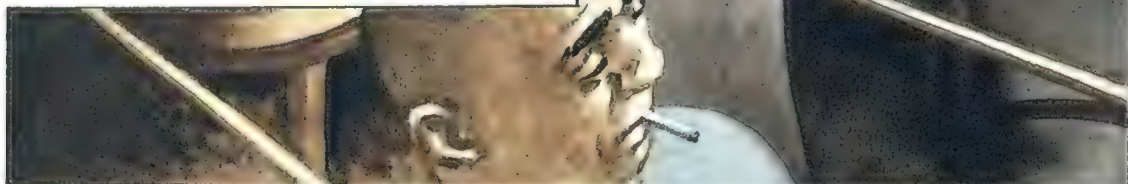
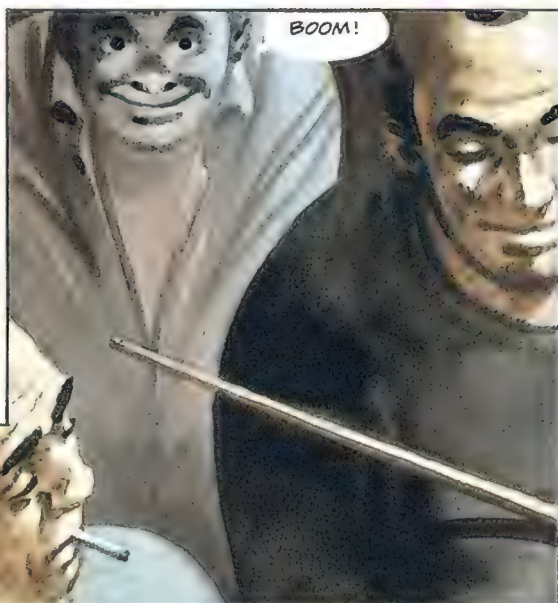
## "ANTARCTICA"











BOOM  
... BOOM!





YOU'RE GONNA  
GET A SLAP,  
TWAT!

ME AND MY  
MOUTH.

OI! DON'T  
BLOODY START  
--OR YOU'RE  
OUT,  
AWRIGHT?



YOU DON'T WANT  
TROUBLE, YOU  
SHOULDN'T LET THEM  
FUCKIN' NODDIES  
IN HERE.



BOOM...  
BOOM!

GIN 'N' TONIC,  
WHEN YOU'RE  
READY.

'IS  
MONEY'S AS  
GOOD AS YOURS,  
PAL.



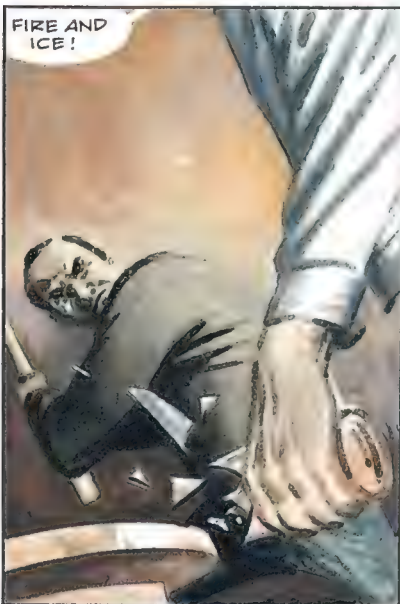
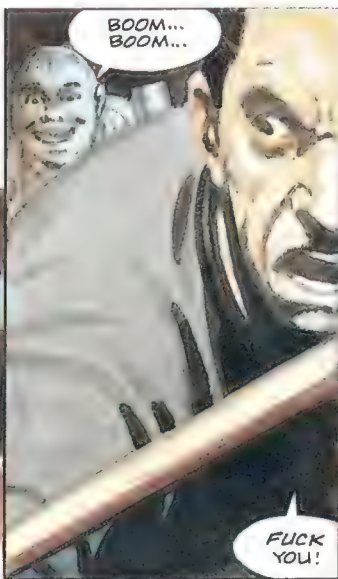
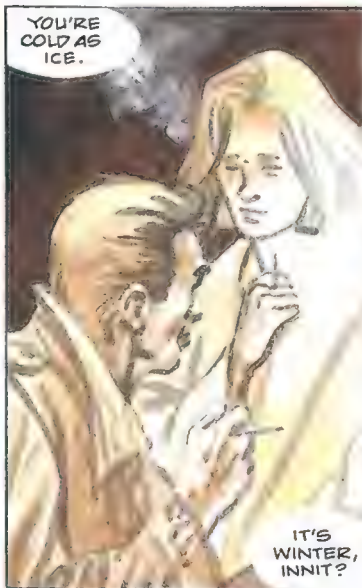
THASS  
A QUEER'S  
DRINK,  
INNIT?

TWENTY-  
FIVE GUILD IF YOU  
SUCK MY DICK.

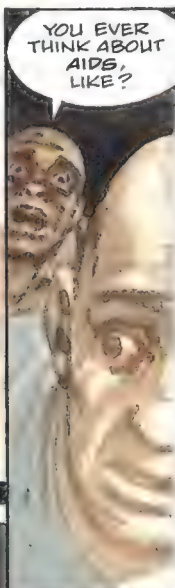


I'LL DO IT  
FOR  
FIFTEEN.













HAH! PINK  
GIN.



BETTER GIVE  
US A FRESH  
ONE.

NO WAY,  
YOU SICK  
BASTARD.

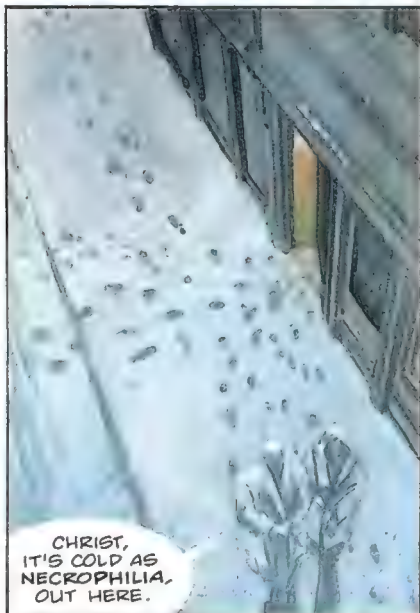
I'VE GOT A  
BOTTLE OF WHITE  
SATIN, AT HOME.



ALL RIGHT, DARLIN',  
YOU DON'T HAVE TO  
BEG. I'M YOURS,  
OKAY?



NOT  
MUCH CHANCE OF  
A BETTER OFFER,  
NOW, IS THERE?



CHRIST,  
IT'S COLD AS  
NECROPHILIA,  
OUT HERE.



WHAT'S  
UP WITH  
YOU?

"PINK  
GIN" -- THAT  
WAS  
BRILLIANT....



NAH, IT WEREN'T.  
IT WAS A CHEAP  
SHOT, FROM A CHEAP  
SHOT, IN A CHEAP  
SUIT.

Y'KNOW, SOME-  
TIMES I TURN  
MYSELF RIGHT  
OFF.





WE  
GOT FAR TO  
GO?

YOU'RE  
EAGER.

NO,  
DARLIN'---I'M  
HYPOTHERMIC.



STOP WHINING. IT'S  
JUST ALONG HERE. NICE  
AND HANDY FOR THE  
TUBE TO WORK.

WORK..?

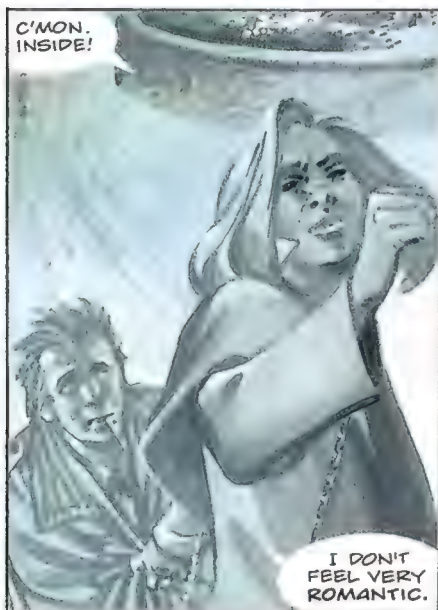


YEAH... MY DAY JOB.  
I WORK FOR A TV  
PRODUCTION  
COMPANY.

THIS IS  
JUST FOR PIN  
MONEY, Y'KNOW?

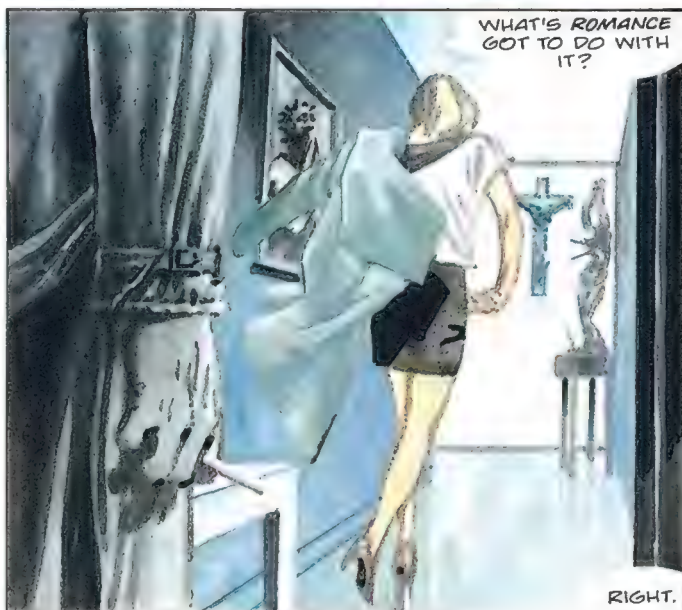


HMMM...  
YOU REALLY  
ARE  
COLD, AREN'T  
YOU?



C'MON.  
INSIDE!

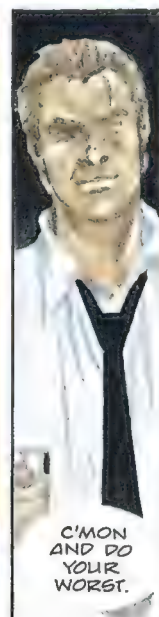
I DON'T  
FEEL VERY  
ROMANTIC.



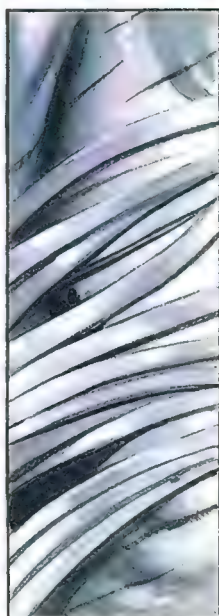
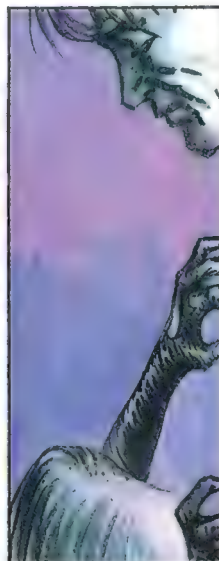
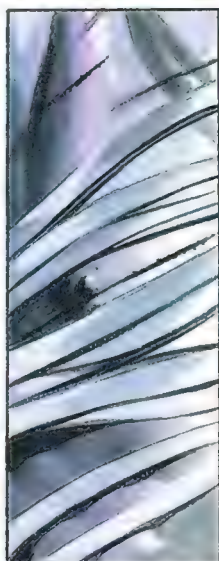
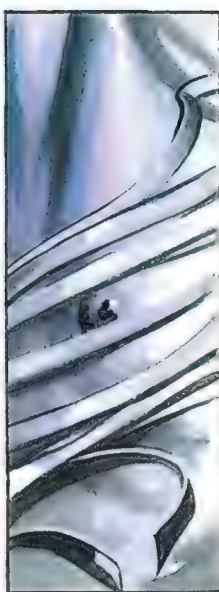
WHAT'S ROMANCE  
GOT TO DO WITH  
IT?

RIGHT.









HARDER,  
YOU PATHETIC  
STILETTO BITCH!  
I STILL CAN'T  
FUCKIN' FEEL IT!



I... I CAN'T.  
IT'S LIKE...  
LIKE...



I'M SORRY.  
I THOUGHT...

FORGET  
IT.

FLOGGIN'  
A DEAD  
HORSE..?

TOLD  
YOU SO.



I'M  
COLD.



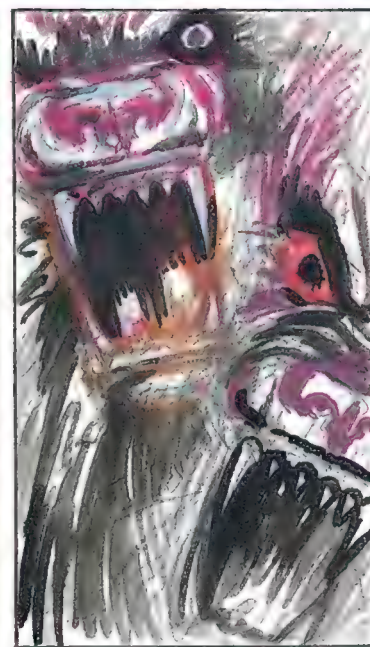
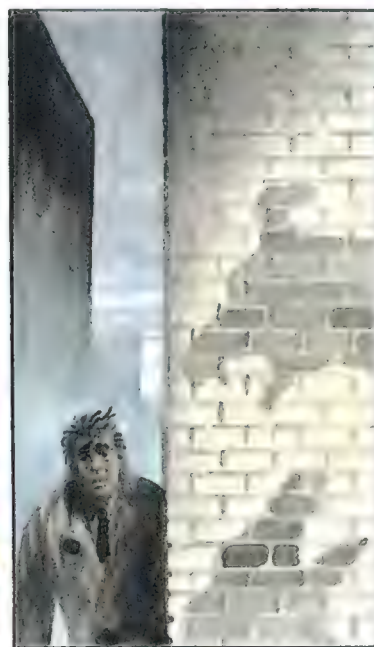
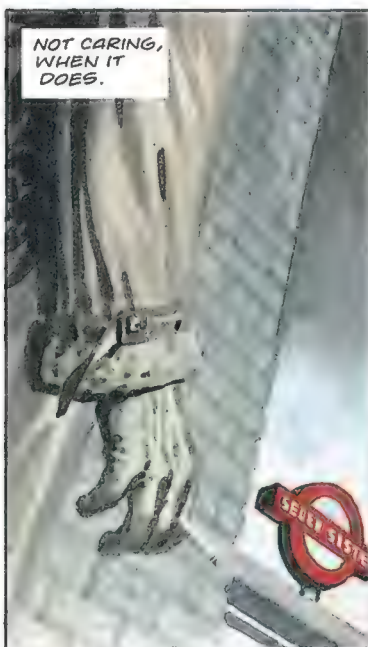
STAY  
WITH ME.



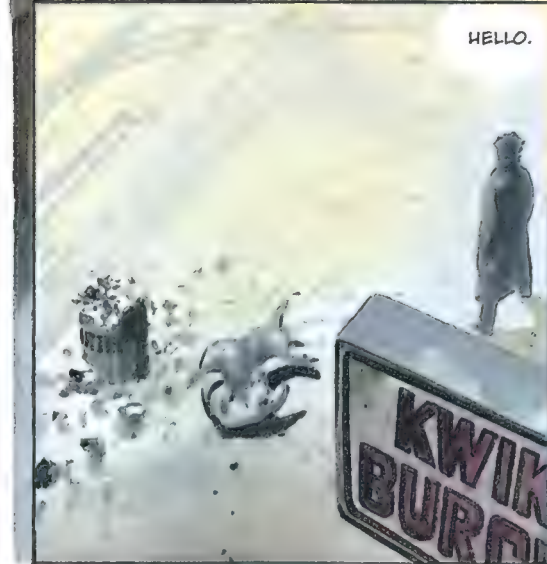
DON'T  
BE BLOODY  
STUPID.















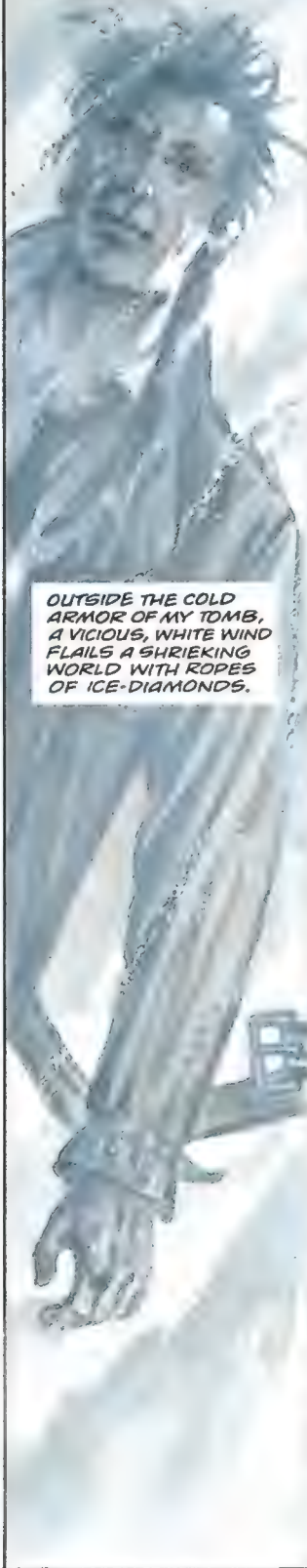
WON'T  
YOU TELL ME  
YOUR...

...NAME?





A SUBLIMINAL FLASH  
OF COLD-FIRE  
DAMASCENE LIGHT  
FREEZE-DRIES ME,  
AND SUSPENDS ME IN  
BREATHLESS, POLAR  
ISOLATION.



OUTSIDE THE COLD  
ARMOR OF MY TOMB,  
A VICIOUS, WHITE WIND  
FLAILS A SHRIEKING  
WORLD WITH ROPES  
OF ICE-DIAMONDS.



I CAN'T MOVE.  
I CAN'T HEAR.



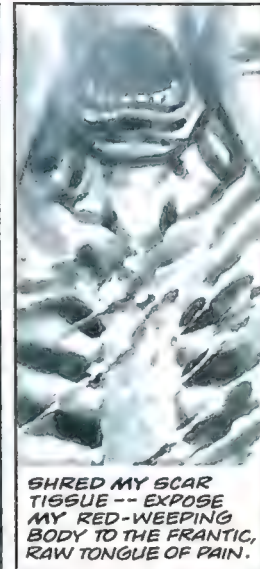
TORMENTED BY THE  
CRUEL MEMORY OF  
A WITHERED LUST...



...THE DEEP, COLD  
MISERY OF MY DEAD-  
MEAT FLESH CRAWLS  
WITH A DESPERATE,  
DULL CRAVING FOR  
SENSATION.



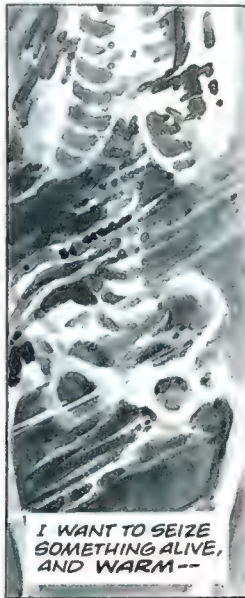
I WANT TO FEEL  
THE BLIZZARD  
LAY ME BARE...



SHRED MY SCAR  
TISSUE -- EXPOSE  
MY RED-WEeping  
BODY TO THE FRANTIC,  
RAW TONGUE OF PAIN.



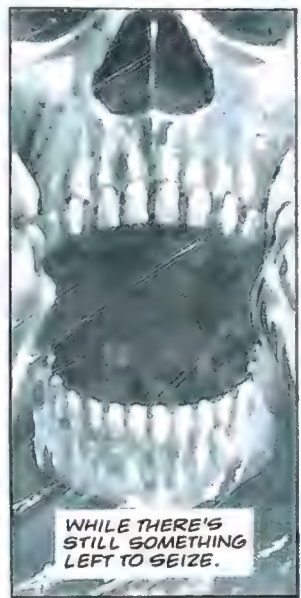
I WANT TO TOUCH  
SOMETHING... ANY-  
THING.



I WANT TO SEIZE  
SOMETHING ALIVE,  
AND WARM--

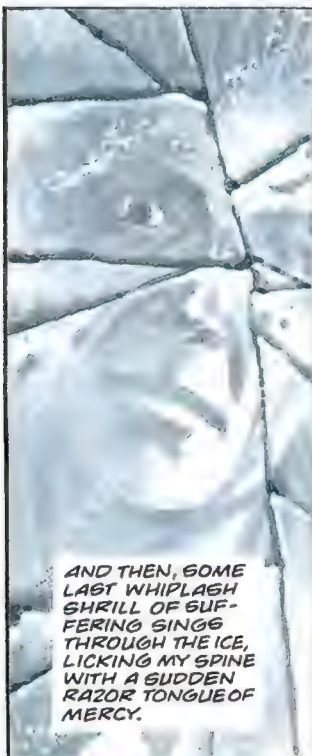


TO HOLD IT, AND  
HOWL WITH IT--  
WRESTLE WITH IT,  
SCREAM WITH IT...



WHILE THERE'S  
STILL SOMETHING  
LEFT TO SEIZE.





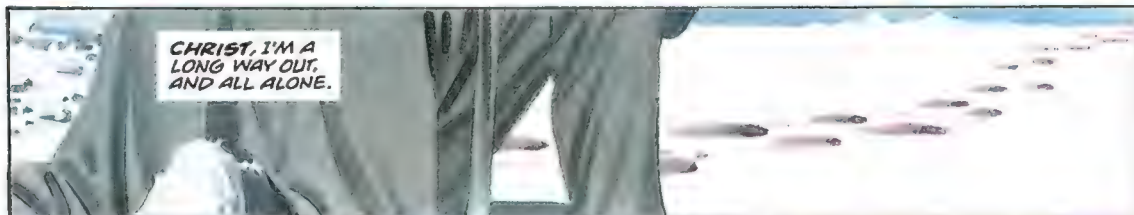
AND THEN, SOME  
LAST WHIPLASH  
SHRILL OF SUFFERING  
SINGS  
THROUGH THE ICE,  
LICKING MY SPINE  
WITH A SUDDEN  
RAZOR TONGUE OF  
MERCY.



A TRANSCENDENT  
SECOND OF REFLEX  
SHUDDERING-- A  
CRYSTAL SHIVER.



... AND THAT'S  
ALL. I SPRAWL,  
ABANDONED,  
INTO EMPTY  
DESOLATION.



CHRIST, I'M A  
LONG WAY OUT.  
AND ALL ALONE.



BUT I'M NOT THE  
FIRST WHO'S  
BEEN THIS WAY.  
I JUST HAVE TO  
CRAWL...



AND CRAWL...



UNTIL I  
FIND HER.





AH!

GET THE FUCK  
OFF OF ME, YOU  
VULTURES...



I'M NOT  
BLOODY DEAD  
YET!



CALM DOWN,  
LADDIE. YOU'RE IN  
SHOCK. YOU NEED  
TREATMENT.

LOOK  
AT THE  
STATE OF  
YOU.

YEAH, WELL  
...IT WAS A ROUGH  
NIGHT BEFORE THE  
BOMB.



MOST OF THIS  
IS DOG BLOOD,  
ANYWAY.

I WAS  
JUST ABOUT TO  
CHEW OUT ITS  
THROAT WHEN  
EVERYTHING WENT  
BLACK.



LOAN US SOME  
OF YOUR TISSUES,  
MATE.

THE LANDLADY'LL  
SHIT IF I WALK IN  
LIKE THIS,  
AGAIN.



'ERE...  
YOU CAN'T JUST  
WANDER OFF.  
SPECIAL BRANCH'LL  
WANT A WORD  
WITH YOU.

YEAH...  
WELL, CHIEF,  
THAT'S IT, YOU  
SEE...





I AM  
SPECIAL  
BRANCH.



CAN'T LET  
THE TRAIL  
GO COLD,  
CAN I?



HER EYES FOLLOW ME ALL  
THE WAY HOME AND INTO  
BED -- ENDURING, DEEP,  
DARK EYES... THAT SEE  
EVERYTHING, AND NEVER  
LOOK AWAY.

I DREAM A CLAMMY, "COLD-  
TURKEY" SORT OF DREAM:  
NUMB SEX, AN INDEFINABLE  
SENSE OF LOSS, CONFUSION,  
BLIZZARDS OF DAMP,  
PEELING SKIN -- FAT, BLUE  
TONGUES CRAWLING FREE  
FROM CORPSE-MOUTHS...

THAT'S A  
PLEASANT  
SURPRISE.



DREAMING'S A  
VITAL SIGN.



FIRST TIME I'VE  
DREAMT SINCE  
THIS ICE-AGE  
SET IN.

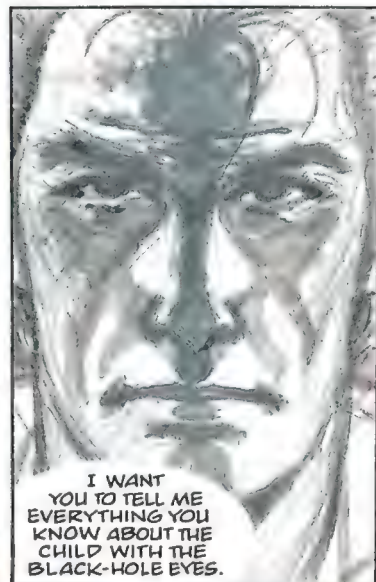


YOUR SOUL  
DIES IF YOU  
STOP  
DREAMING.

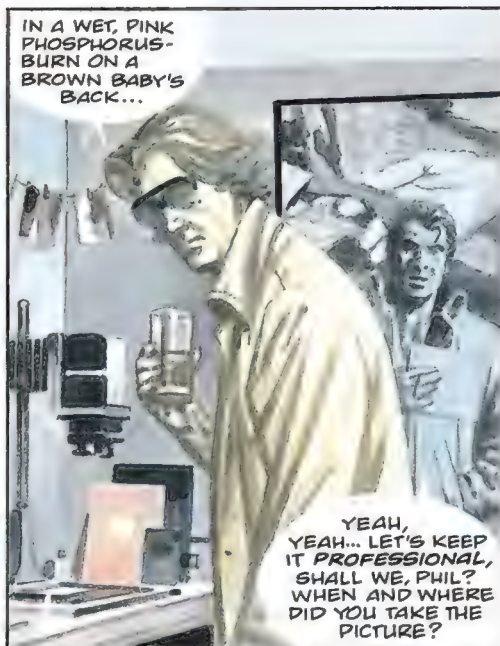
















TELL YOU ONE  
THING I DO  
REMEMBER,  
THOUGH...

KID DIDN'T  
DIE. COUPLE  
OF AMERICAN AID-  
WORKERS FROM ONE  
OF THOSE BIBLE BELT  
MISSIONARY OUTFITS  
SAW MY PICTURE.



SAID  
THAT GOD HAD  
MARKED HER OUT TO  
BE SAVED -- ONE OUT  
OF MANY, OR SOME  
SUCH CRAP. THEY  
TRACKED HER DOWN  
AND ADOPTED HER.  
TOOK HER BACK TO THE  
STATES, EVENTUALLY.



I NEED  
THEIR NAME,  
AND THE NAME  
OF THEIR  
CHURCH.

YOU  
HAVE GOT  
IT BAD,  
OLD SON.



GOT TO GO,  
CHAP. DEATH  
WAITS FOR NO  
MAN.



LOOK  
IN THE FILE.  
THERE'S A PICTURE  
OF THEM WITH THE  
KID -- UNDER "J" FOR  
JORGENSEN. THE  
ADDRESS'LL BE ON  
THE BACK.

JUST  
SLAM THE  
DOOR WHEN  
YOU LEAVE.

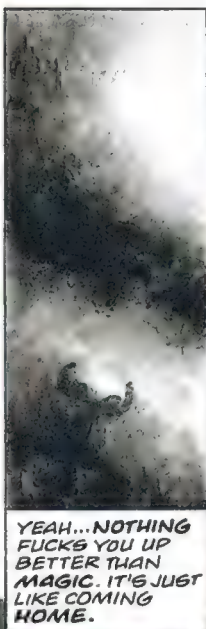


THANKS,  
MATE. GOOD  
LUCK.





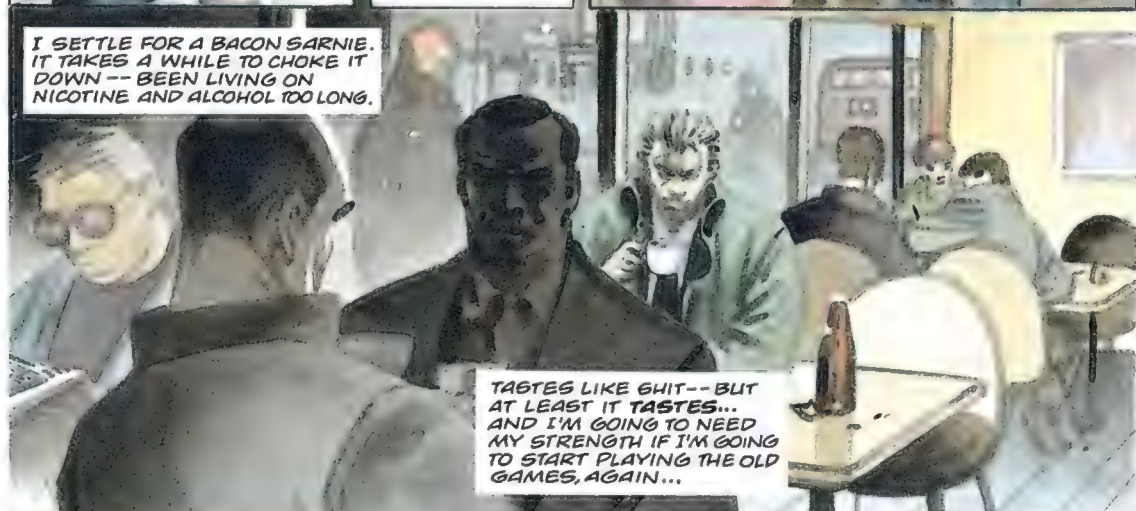
THE PAVEMENT QUAKES.  
MY HEAD LURCHES,  
WOBBLING LIKE A TETHERED  
BALLOON. I FEEL  
SICK AS A POISONED DOG.



YEAH...NOTHING  
FUCKS YOU UP  
BETTER THAN  
MAGIC. IT'S JUST  
LIKE COMING  
HOME.

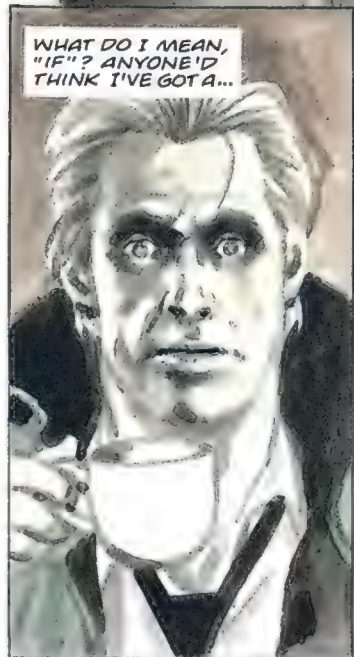


JESUS, I'M HUNGRY  
...COULD EAT A  
SCABBY-KID'S 'EAD.

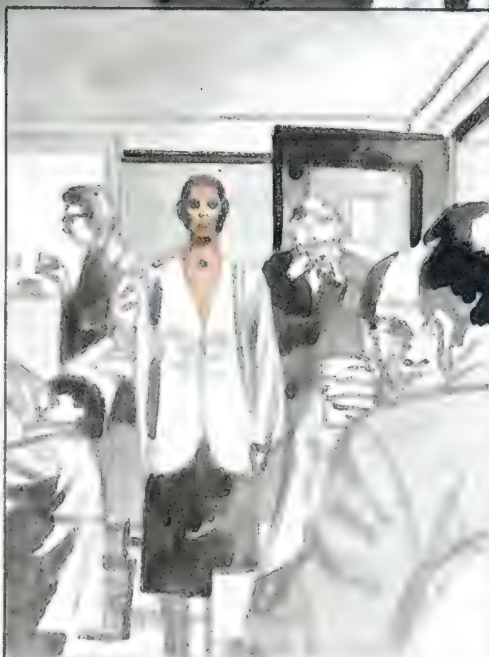


I SETTLE FOR A BACON SARNIE.  
IT TAKES A WHILE TO CHOKE IT  
DOWN -- BEEN LIVING ON  
NICOTINE AND ALCOHOL TOO LONG.

TASTES LIKE GHIT--BUT  
AT LEAST IT TASTES...  
AND I'M GOING TO NEED  
MY STRENGTH IF I'M GOING  
TO START PLAYING THE OLD  
GAMES, AGAIN...



WHAT DO I MEAN,  
"IF"? ANYONE'D  
THINK I'VE GOT A...

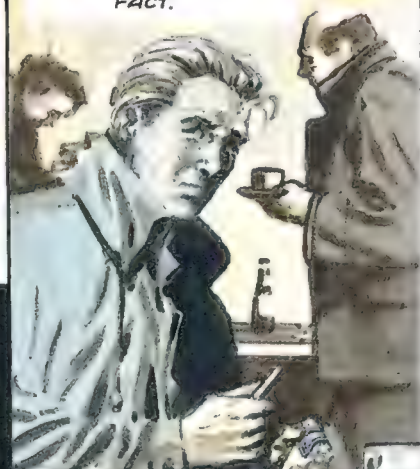




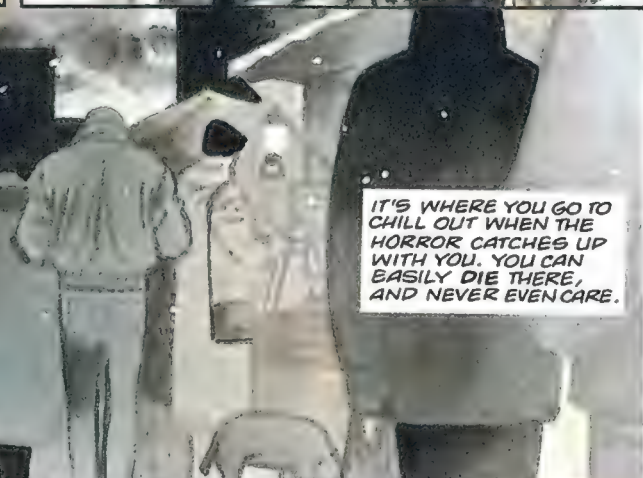


...CHOICE.

WONDER IF THE SUN'S  
STILL SHINING ABOVE  
THOSE CLOUDS...  
SEEMS LIKE A LONG  
TIME SINCE I SAW THE  
SUN -- A FUCKING,  
FROZEN ETERNITY, IN  
FACT.



HELL IS A SLOW, COLD  
DREAM... A NUMB  
DESCENT TO ABSOLUTE  
ZERO... A DEAD-EYED  
OBSERVATION OF  
ATROCITY.



IT'S WHERE YOU GO TO  
CHILL OUT WHEN THE  
HORROR CATCHES UP  
WITH YOU. YOU CAN  
EASILY DIE THERE,  
AND NEVER EVEN CARE.



UNLESS YOU GET LUCKY.  
UNLESS MAGIC HITS YOU  
UPSIDE THE HEAD WITH A  
QUARTER-POUND OF  
SEMTEX, AND GETS YOUR  
ATTENTION.



THEN YOU REMEMBER  
THAT YOU WERE HUMAN  
ONCE, AND GET ALL  
SENTIMENTAL. NEXT  
THING, YOU'RE PLANNING  
CHRISTMAS IN MINNESOTA.




CLASSIC, MATE.  
LOOKS BRILLIANT--  
KEEP THE COLD OUT  
A TREAT, THAT WILL.  
CALL IT FIFTY  
QUID.

IT'LL  
DO.


THERE A  
TRAVEL AGENT'S  
'ROUND HERE..?





WE'RE PROBABLY STILL SOME-  
WHERE OVER THE POLE WHEN  
THE INITIAL RUSH RUNS OUT,  
AND ANTICIPATION THICKENS  
INTO DREAD.

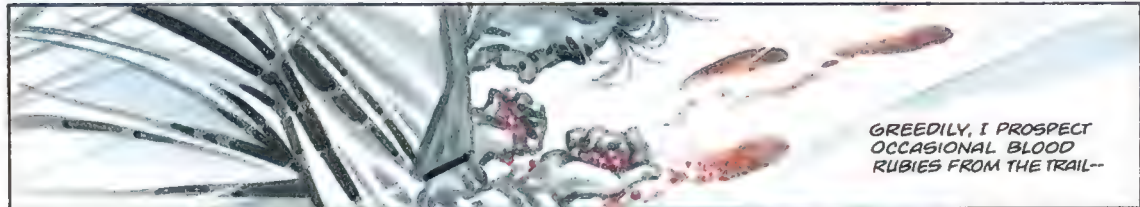
AN INEXPERIENCED MAN  
MIGHT PANIC: I JUST  
RECLINE THE SEAT, CLOSE  
MY EYES AND SETTLE  
DOWN FOR THE LONG HAUL.




NO MORE ICE-  
FORTRESS  
SANCTUARY  
FROM PAIN. ON  
AUTO-PILOT, I  
TREK THE FRO-  
ZEN OCEAN OF  
INDIFFERENCE...



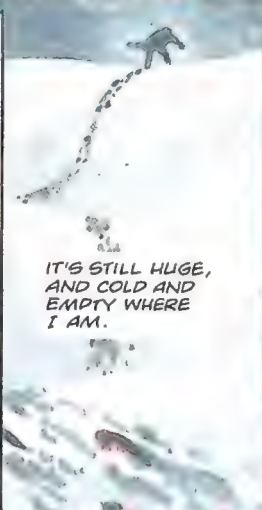
...FOLLOWING  
RED BEACONS OF  
REMEMBERED  
WARMTH.



GREEDILY, I PROSPECT  
OCCASIONAL BLOOD  
RUBIES FROM THE TRAIL--



THEN WATCH THEM  
DISSOLVE INTO A  
SAD, STICKY MESS,  
SMEARING MY  
CLUTCHING HANDS.



IT'S STILL HUGE,  
AND COLD AND  
EMPTY WHERE  
I AM.



I'M STILL LOST  
IN THE BLIZZARD'S  
BELLOWING  
MISERY.





HEY, FELLA... YOU CAN  
QUIT THAT GODDAMN  
MOANING NOW. WE'RE  
DOWN, AND WE'RE  
ALIVE, OKAY..?



YOU  
SURE..? STILL  
LOOKS LIKE  
HELL TO ME.

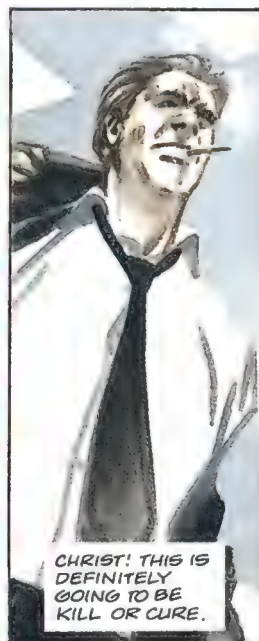


AIRPORTS ARE  
NEUTRAL SPACE--  
LIMBO. I FLOAT  
FOR A WHILE...  
FOCUSING.



MY BALLS TIGHTEN AS THE  
BLACK-HOLE EYES SUCK AT  
ME -- THEIR SCREAMING  
EMPTYNESS RECOGNIZING...  
INVITING... SILENTLY  
DEMANDING.

MY HAND TREMBLES:  
MY SKIN CRAWLS.



CHRIST! THIS IS  
DEFINITELY  
GOING TO BE  
KILL OR CURE.





THIS IS WHERE  
THEY BROUGHT A  
KID FROM AFRICA?

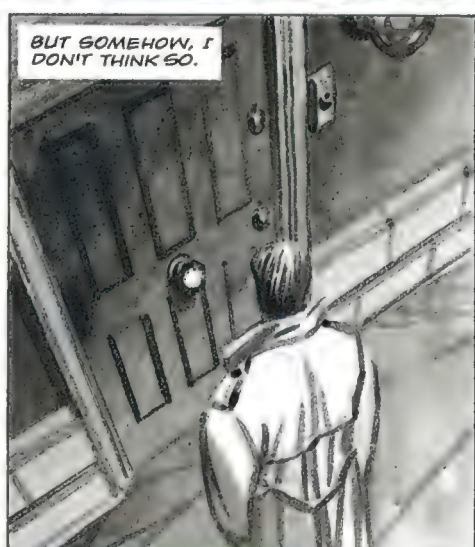


OH WELL, THEY'RE CHRISTIANS  
--EXPECT THEY MEANT WELL.



STEADY, JOHN. DON'T  
WANT TO ANTAGONIZE  
THEM WITH A BAD  
ATTITUDE.

FOR ALL  
YOU KNOW, THE KID  
MIGHT BE INSIDE  
RIGHT NOW, WRAPPING  
UP PRESENTS FOR  
MOM AND POP.



BUT SOMEHOW, I  
DON'T THINK SO.



WHAT?  
I'M BUSY.

OH, I'M  
SORRY. I  
THOUGHT THIS  
WAS THE  
JORGENSEN  
HOME...

IT IS.



REALLY? I  
WAS EXPECTING  
A MUCH OLDER  
WOMAN.



HEY, DO I LOOK  
LIKE I WAS BORN  
YESTERDAY? WHAT  
ARE YOU SELLING,  
FELLA?

AN'  
WHERE DID  
YOU GET THAT  
PHONY BRITISH  
ACCENT?





OKAY, JOHN... YOU JUST GONNA SIT THERE SWILLIN' MY LIQUOR AN' WHINING ABOUT THE WEATHER, OR ARE YOU GONNA TELL ME WHAT YOU REALLY WANT?

I SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY FAIR.



JUST ONE MORE TOP-UP?

SEE, I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE, MARTHA-- SOMEONE SORT OF SPECIAL.



HOLD THE GLASS STILL, YOU'LL SPILL IT.



GIVE ME A CIGARETTE.



IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO ME. I NEED YOUR HELP.



I WANT TO SEE THE CHILD, MARTHA.



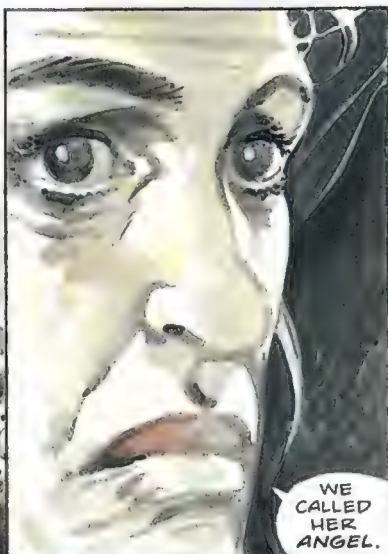
THE ONE YOU BROUGHT HOME FROM MOZAMBIQUE IN 1986.



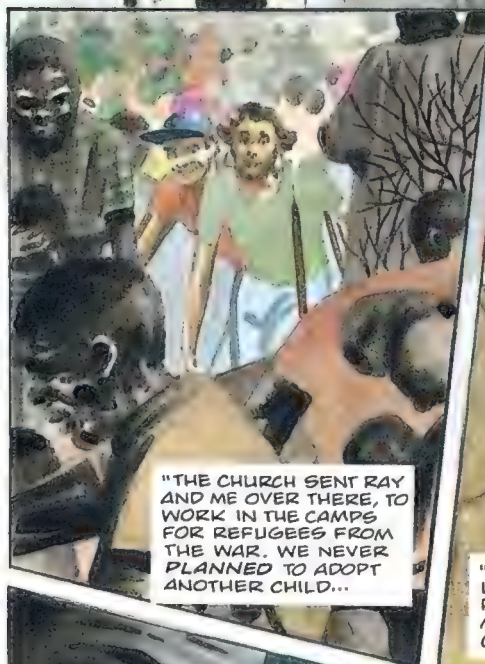
I  
SUPPOSE  
SHE'S GROWN  
UP, BY  
NOW...?



"SHE"  
IS DEAD, MR  
CONSTANTINE. SO  
ARE RAY AND  
KATHY.



WE  
CALLED  
HER  
ANGEL.



"THE CHURCH SENT RAY  
AND ME OVER THERE, TO  
WORK IN THE CAMPS  
FOR REFUGEES FROM  
THE WAR. WE NEVER  
PLANNED TO ADOPT  
ANOTHER CHILD..."



"... BUT GOD SHOWED  
US ANGEL IN A  
PHOTOGRAPH --  
MADE US SEEK HER  
OUT AND SAVE HER.



"IT SEEMED THE LEAST  
THAT WE COULD DO... WE  
WERE SO GRATEFUL FOR  
THE BLESSING OF OUR  
OWN HAPPY, HEALTHY  
CHILD, YOU SEE.



"KATHY WAS WILD WITH  
EXCITEMENT WHEN WE  
CALLED TO SAY WE'D BE  
BRINGING A NEW SISTER  
BACK TO SHARE OUR HOME.

"SHE WAS TEN, THAT  
YEAR. SHE'D'VE BEEN  
FINISHING COLLEGE  
NOW..."



"LIVING WITH ANGEL WAS VERY STRANGE. I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER TOO MUCH WHAT IT WAS LIKE. SHE WAS LOVELY, BUT SHE SORT OF... SUCKED YOU DRY."

"SHE DID WELL. SHE WAS SMART AT SCHOOL ...HEALTHY--THOUGH SHE WAS A LATE DEVELOPER, STILL HADN'T HIT PUBERTY AT FIFTEEN, WHEN..."

BUT HEY... THIS IS NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS!

YOU'RE TELLING ME BECAUSE YOU NEED TO TALK, MARTHA-- AND BECAUSE I NEED TO KNOW.

SO, WHAT HAPPENED TO RAY AND KATHY? WHAT HAPPENED TO ANGEL?

"NOTHING GOOD. KATHY GOT ANOREXIA, AND RAY GOT CRAZY. ANGEL GOT KILLED, AND I GOT DRUNK!"

"BEEN THAT WAY FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS."

"KATHY WASTING AWAY BEFORE HIS EYES JUST ATE RAY UP."

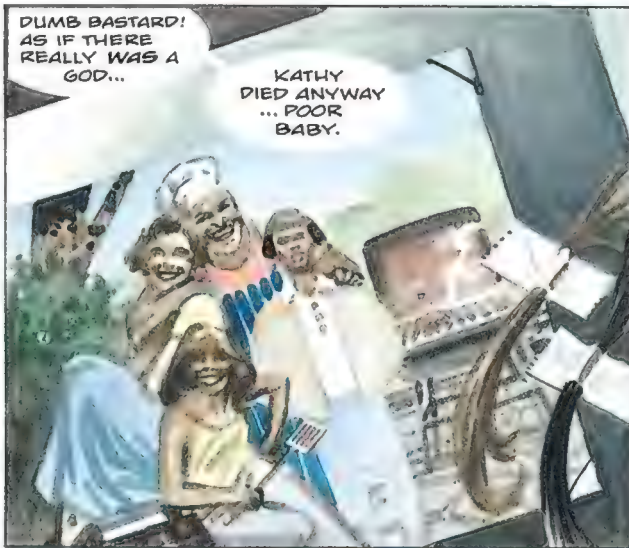
"HE TOOK SOME MAD NOTION THAT ANGEL WAS A 'CUCKOO IN THE NEST' -- AN 'EVIL PARASITE' THAT WAS FEEDING OFF KATHY'S VITAL SOUL."

"THAT'S WHAT HE SAID IN THE NOTE HE LEFT, ANYHOW."

"AND THAT HE LOVED US... THAT HE HOPED GOD WOULD FORGIVE HIM FOR TAKING ANGEL OUT TO THE RIVER --FOR STRANGLING HER AND WEIGHING HER BODY DOWN WITH ROCKS..."

"...AND FOR COMING HOME AFTERWARDS AND HANGING HIMSELF UP IN THE GARAGE FOR ME TO FIND."





DUMB BASTARD!  
AS IF THERE  
REALLY WAS A  
GOD...

KATHY  
DIED ANYWAY  
... POOR  
BABY.



SHE'S  
NOT  
DEAD.

I OUGHTA  
KNOW. I WAS  
HOLDING HER HAND  
IN THE HOSPITAL  
WHEN SHE WENT.



NOT KATHY...  
I DON'T CARE  
ABOUT  
HER.

I  
DON'T BELIEVE  
ANGEL'S DEAD.



SHIT! I'M  
SORRY, I  
DIDN'T  
MEAN--

LOOK,  
DID THEY  
EVER DRAG  
UP A  
BODY?

NO.

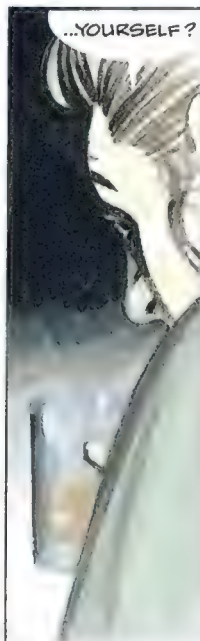


IT'S ODD. THIS IS  
THE FIRST TIME I'VE  
EVER BEEN ABLE TO  
SPEAK ABOUT THIS  
STUFF. ALL OUR  
FRIENDS WERE IN  
THE CHURCH...

IT'S  
GOOD TO TALK.  
WHY DON'T YOU  
HAVE ANOTHER  
DRINK, JOHN?



I'VE GOT  
SOME TV DINNERS,  
IF YOU'RE HUNGRY?  
WHY DON'T YOU  
STAY A WHILE AND  
TELL ME SOMETHING  
ABOUT...



...YOURSELF?







I NEED TO TAKE A  
SHORTCUT. THE  
TRAIL IS TWO  
YEARS COLD IN  
MINNESOTA--SHE  
COULD BE ANY-  
WHERE. BY NOW.



A HOT, DARK  
PLACE...



AN  
UNCHAINED  
MIND...

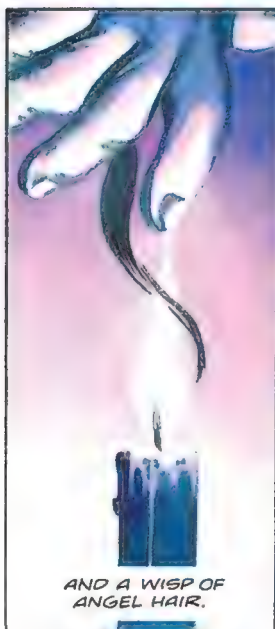


AND A  
FEVERISH,  
SWEATING  
WILL TO  
KNOW.

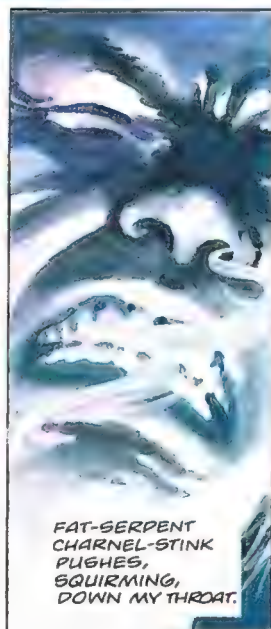


THAT'S ALL YOU  
REALLY NEED FOR  
MAGIC. THE DETAILS,  
YOU IMPROVISE.

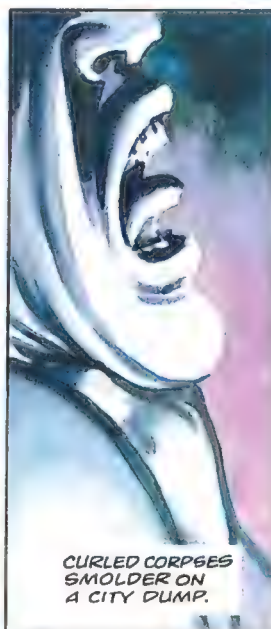
SO, LET'S PLAY  
WITH RITUAL...  
A WISH, A MAP,  
A FLAME...



AND A WISP OF  
ANGEL HAIR.



FAT-SERPENT  
CHARNEL-STINK  
PUGNES,  
SQUIRMING,  
DOWN MY THROAT.



CURLED CORPSES  
SMOLDER ON  
A CITY DUMP.



FLESH SPLITS:  
SKIN BUBBLES.





THE WORLD  
SCREAMS AS  
I WRITHE AND  
DIE IN MY  
SUFFERING  
MILLIONS...

MAGIC CAN BE  
RISKY, THOUGH.



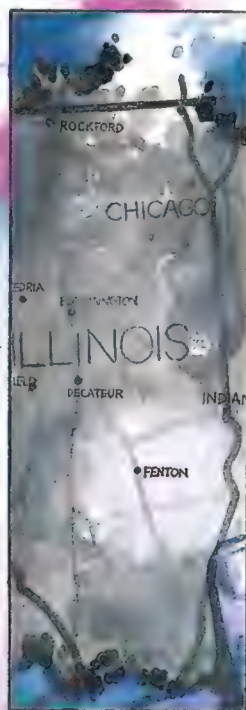
GOT TO STAY  
COOL... KEEP  
YOUR WITS  
ABOUT YOU...



ALWAYS BE READY  
TO SNATCH VICTORY  
FROM THE ASHES  
OF DISASTER...




OR SOME  
FUCKIN' CLICHÉ  
LIKE THAT.



YOU PLAY PRETTY  
ROUGH, ANGEL...  
BUT THEN, I LIKE  
THAT IN A GIRL...

OR WHATEVER  
THE HELL YOU  
ARE.



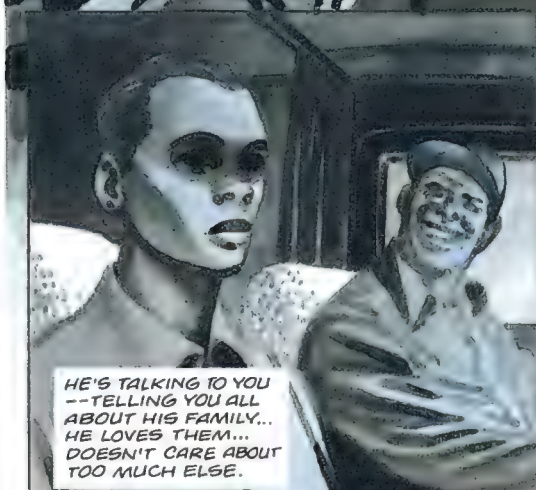


SOMETIMES THERE'S  
SOMEONE FOLLOWING  
YOU. SOMETIMES  
YOU'RE ALL ALONE.  
SOMETIMES THE  
WORLD SCREAMS  
LOUDLY, AND  
OTHERS. JUST  
WHIMPERS AND  
MOANS.

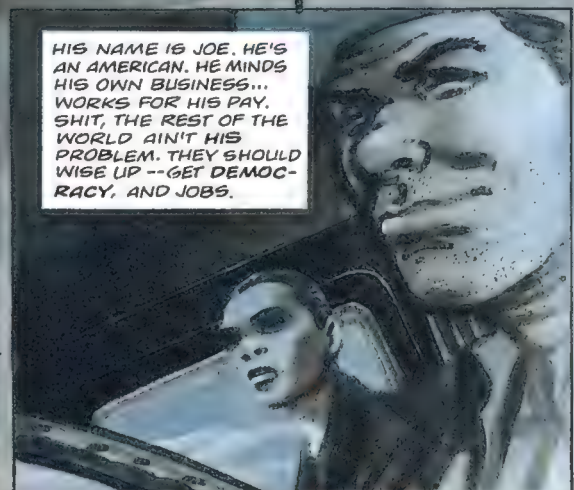
BUT YOUR BURNING  
PAIN IS A CONSTANT  
THING, FIERCE AND  
ENDURING--

LIKE YOUR COLD  
DESIRE TO SHARE  
IT WITH ANYONE  
YOU MEET.


HEY,  
LADY... YOU  
HEADED  
SOUTH?



HE'S TALKING TO YOU  
--TELLING YOU ALL  
ABOUT HIS FAMILY...  
HE LOVES THEM...  
DOESN'T CARE ABOUT  
TOO MUCH ELSE.



HIS NAME IS JOE. HE'S  
AN AMERICAN. HE MINDS  
HIS OWN BUSINESS...  
WORKS FOR HIS PAY.  
SHIT, THE REST OF THE  
WORLD AIN'T HIS  
PROBLEM. THEY SHOULD  
WISE UP --GET DEMOC-  
RACY, AND JOBS.



NAH... JOE DON'T  
WORRY SQUAT  
ABOUT POLITICS.  
HE PAYS THE  
GOVERNMENT  
TO DO THAT.





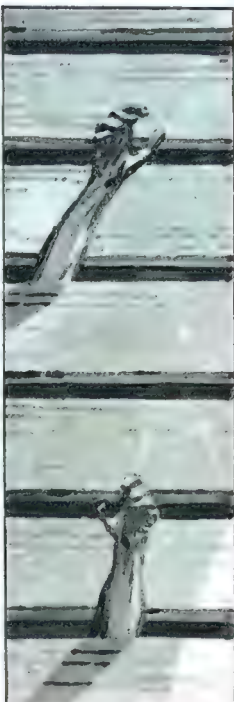


DAMN MILE-  
LONG FREIGHT  
TRAINS...

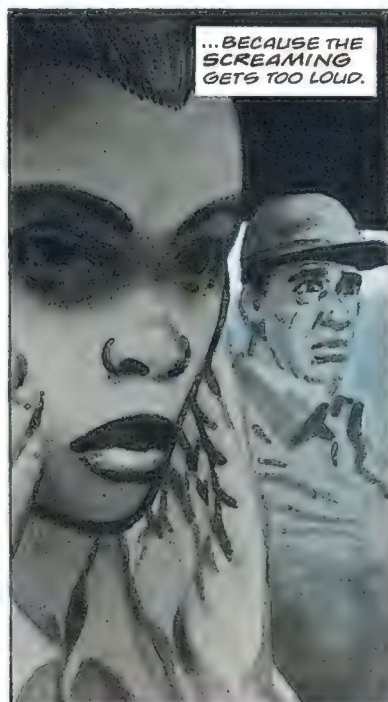
C'MON... C'MON...  
YOU'RE HOLDIN' UP  
PRODUCTION!



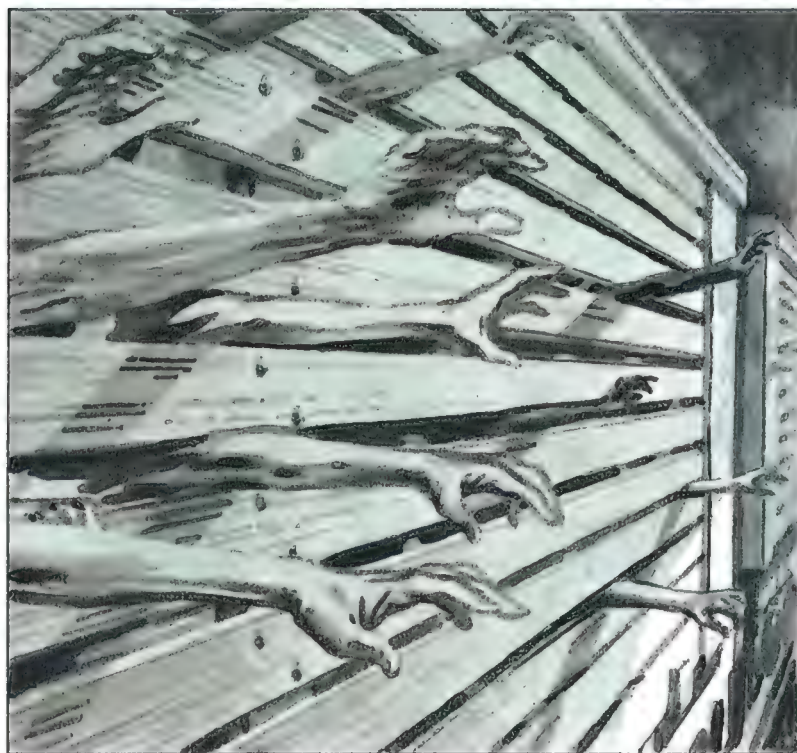
WHAT  
THE  
HELL...?



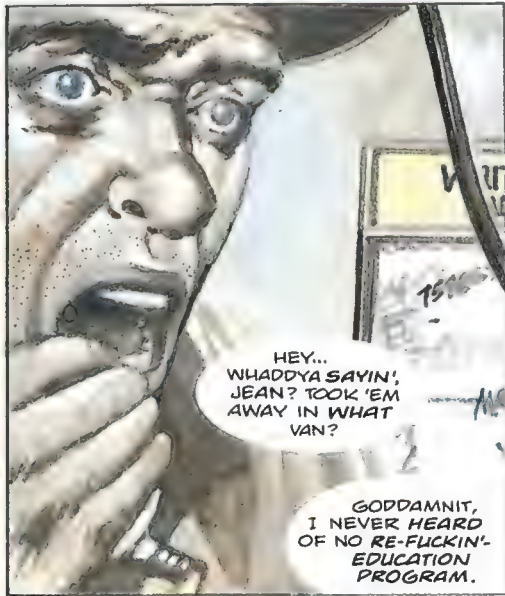
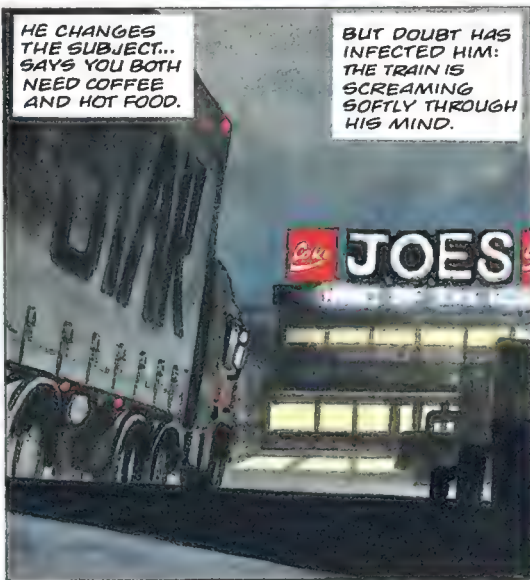
YOU DON'T HEAR  
WHAT ELSE HE  
SAYS...



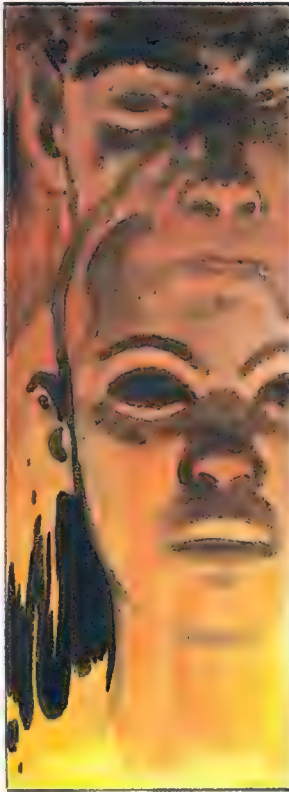
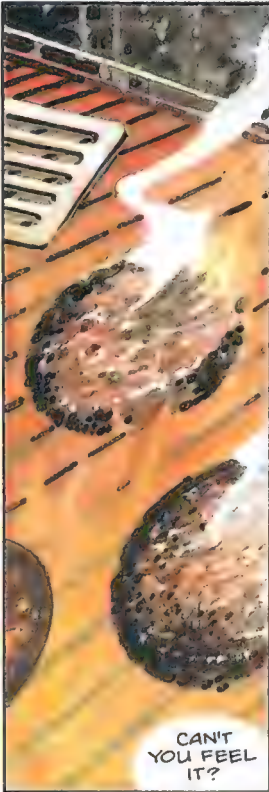
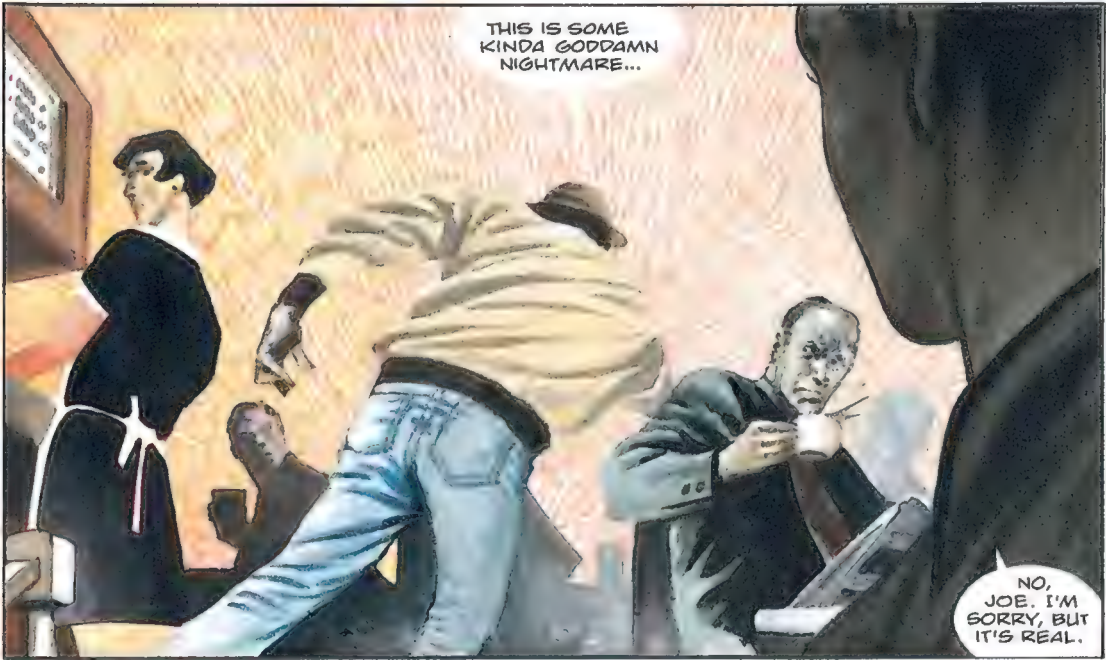
... BECAUSE THE  
SCREAMING  
GETS TOO LOUD.















APARTMENT HOUSE ARSON  
ATTACK... TORTURE SLAYING...  
BUNCH OF DRUG-RELATED  
SHOOTINGS... "SATANIST  
CHILD-ABUSER" INDICTED...  
ABORTION DOCTOR BATTERED  
... ALIEN ABDUCTION... FIRST-  
GRADE STABBING...

PRETTY AVERAGE  
FOR A TOWN OF  
FENTON'S SIZE.



IT'S THE EYES THAT  
TELL ME THIS IS THE  
ONE.



"YEAH, WE CAN GIVE  
YOU THE MAILMAN'S  
ADDRESS... IT'S NOT  
FAR -- BUT YOU  
SHOULD MAYBE TAKE  
A CAB..."



I PREFER TO WALK.  
NOBODY EVEN LOOKS  
AT ME.



INVISIBILITY IS THE  
ART OF NOT BEING  
NOTICED UNLESS  
YOU WANT TO BE.



IT WORKS IF  
YOU BELIEVE  
IT DOES.



THIS  
2660  
ELM?

FUCK  
YOU,  
WHITEY.





THANKS. HERE'S FIVE BUCKS--  
LOOK OUT FOR MY CAR,  
WILLYA?

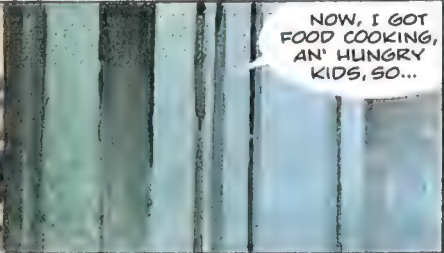


HE AIN'T  
HERE,  
MISTER.

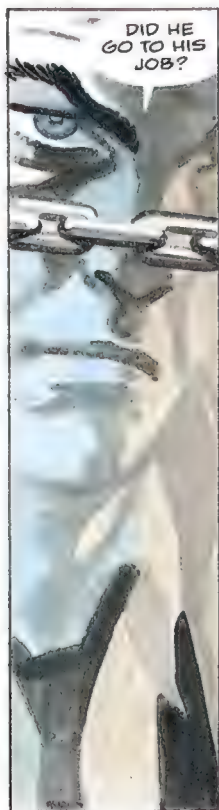
REALLY..?  
I CALLED AND  
HE SAID HE'D  
MEET ME.



I GUESS HE MUSTA  
FORGOT. SINCE HE  
SEEN THEM KIDS GET  
KILLED, CLARENCE  
AIN'T BEEN SO  
TOGETHER...  
Y'KNOW?



NOW, I GOT  
FOOD COOKING,  
AN' HUNGRY  
KIDS, SO...



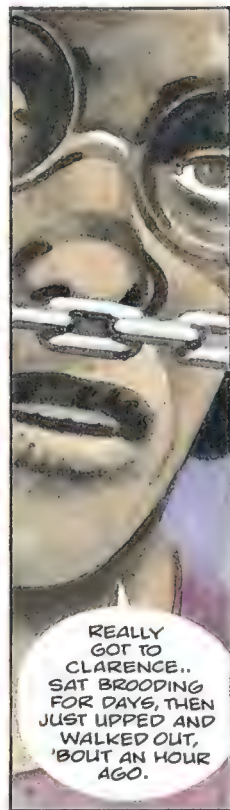
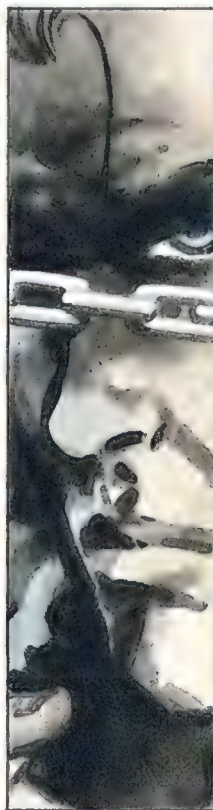
DID HE  
GO TO HIS  
JOB?



NO, HE'S  
ON SICK LEAVE...  
KEEPS GETTING  
NIGHTMARES,  
AN' FLASHBACKS  
TO THE WAR.



DAMN F.B.I.  
DIDN'T HELP  
NONE... KEPT  
QUESTIONING  
HIM ABOUT THE  
DEFENSE PLANT  
NEXT TO WHERE  
IT HAPPENED...  
ON AND ON...



REALLY  
GOT TO  
CLARENCE..  
SAT BROODING  
FOR DAYS, THEN  
JUST UPPED AND  
WALKED OUT,  
'BOUT AN HOUR  
AGO.





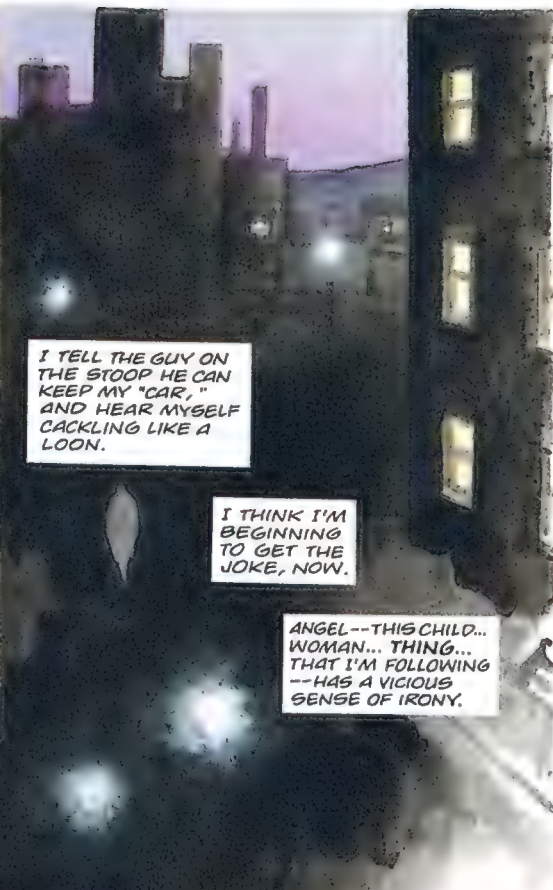
SAID  
HE COULDN'T  
STAND THE KIDS'  
SCREAMING NO  
MORE--AND  
THEY'VE BEEN  
QUIET AS MICE,  
ALL DAY...

THIS DEFENSE  
PLANT--WHERE  
IS IT?

BACK  
OF THE PARK  
...BY THE  
RAILROAD.



I GOTTA  
GO. I SMELL  
MY POT-ROAST  
BURNING.



I TELL THE GUY ON  
THE STOOP HE CAN  
KEEP MY "CAR,"  
AND HEAR MYSELF  
CACKLING LIKE A  
LOON.

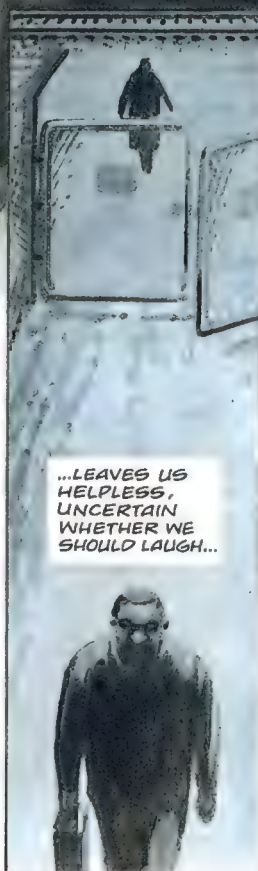
I THINK I'M  
BEGINNING  
TO GET THE  
JOKE, NOW.

ANGEL--THIS CHILD...  
WOMAN... THING...  
THAT I'M FOLLOWING  
--HAS A VICIOUS  
SENSE OF IRONY.

HER JOKES ARE BLACK  
AND CRUEL: SHE  
INFLECTS THEM AT  
RANDOM, LIKE SOME  
KIND OF TERRORIST.



LIKE ALL THE BEST  
COMEDIANS, ANGEL'S  
HUMOR UNBALANCES  
US...



...LEAVES US  
HELPLESS,  
UNCERTAIN  
WHETHER WE  
SHOULD LAUGH...



HEY...  
CLARENCE...  
WHICH WAY DID  
SHE GO, MAN?







...OR WHETHER  
WE SHOULD CRY.





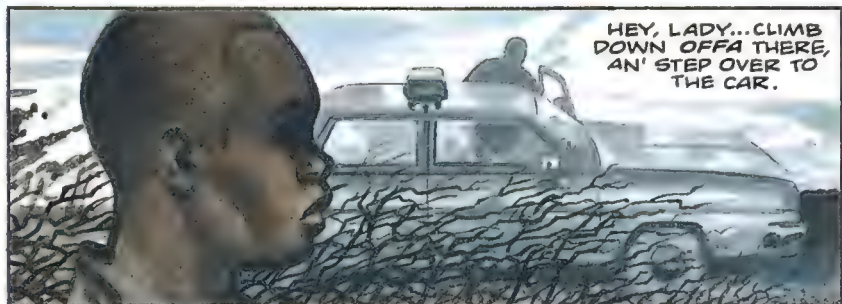


YOU'RE WALKING  
ALONE IN A COLD  
WORLD -- NOT  
HERE, OR THERE,  
BUT SOMEWHERE  
IN BETWEEN.

A STRANGER, BOTH  
ALIEN THREAT AND  
EXOTIC PROMISE,  
YOU'RE ASKING  
FOR IT, REALLY.



HEY, LADY...CLIMB  
DOWN OFFA THERE,  
AN' STEP OVER TO  
THE CAR.



NOW,  
MA'AM.

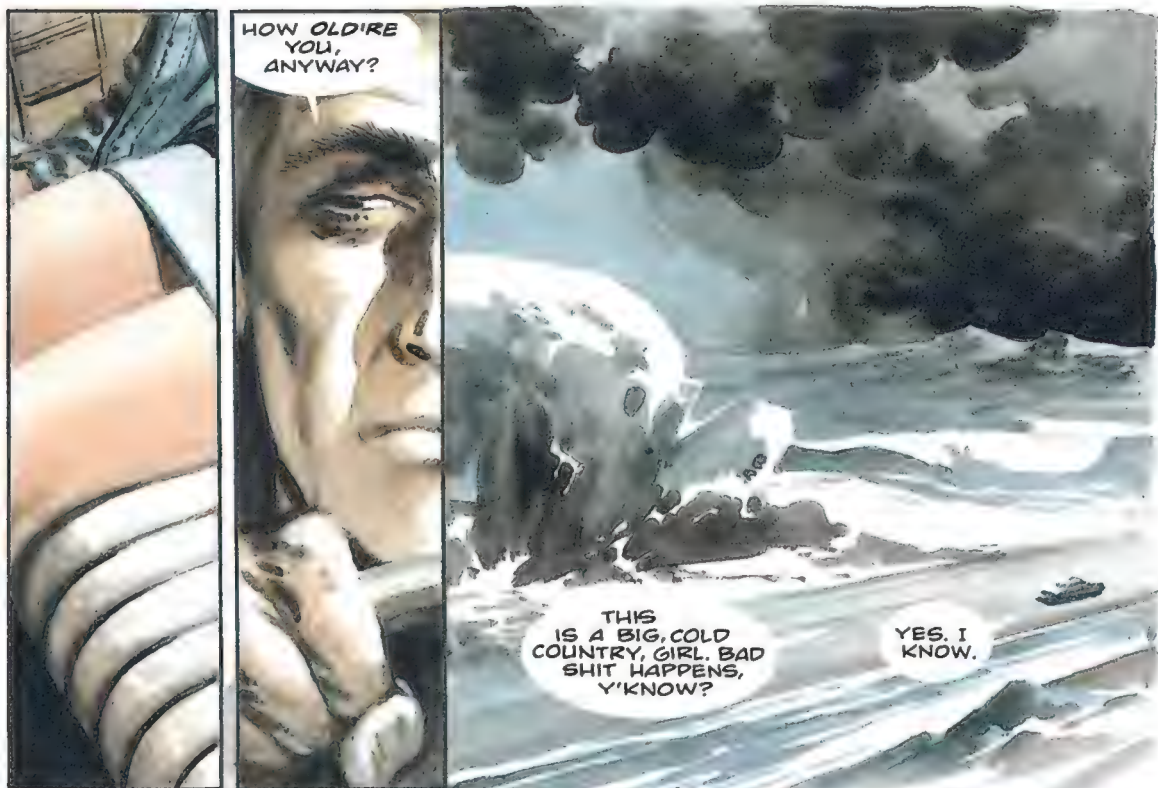


NO ID... NO MONEY...  
I'M GONNA HAVE TO  
TAKE YOU IN AN'  
CHECK YOU OUT.



SORRY  
ABOUT THE RESTRAINT...  
STANDARD  
PROCEDURE.





HOW OLD'RE  
YOU,  
ANYWAY?

THIS  
IS A BIG, COLD  
COUNTRY, GIRL. BAD  
SHIT HAPPENS,  
Y'KNOW?

YES. I  
KNOW.

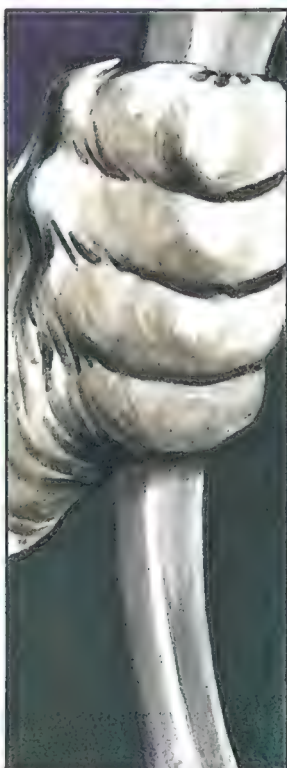


YOU CHILLED?  
YOU WANT ME  
TO TURN UP THE  
HEAT?

DO  
WHAT YOU  
LIKE.



YOU'RE  
IN  
CONTROL.

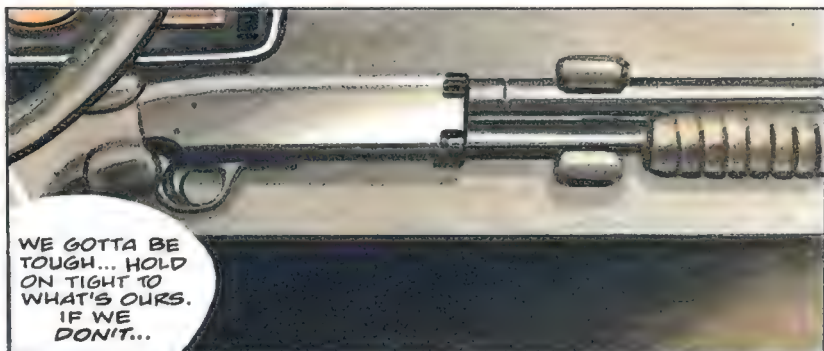


YEAH,  
WELL,  
SOMEBODY  
HAS TO BE.

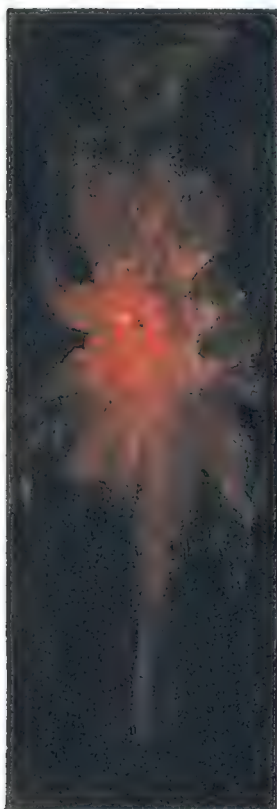
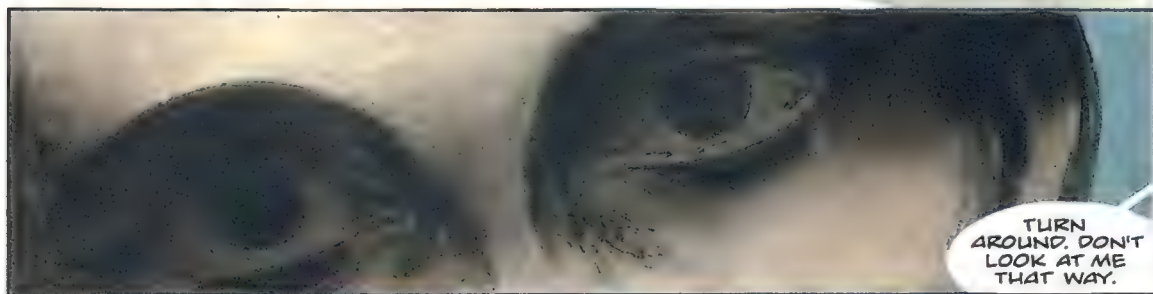
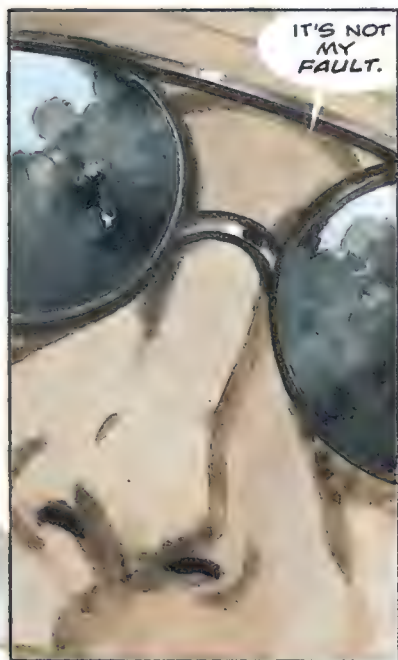


SOMEBODY  
HAS TO  
ENFORCE  
THE LAW...











NO NO NO  
NOOOOOO...



TWENTY-FOUR  
HOURS ON A TRAIN  
WITH A BRICK-  
SHITHOUSE, NAZI  
CONDUCTOR WHO  
WANTS TO SHOOT  
ME BECAUSE HE  
SMELLED TOBACCO  
SMOKE AFTER I  
WENT TO THE BOO...



STUCK FACING SOME  
SIMPLE, FEMALE  
FLESH-MOUNTAIN, AND  
HER PSYCHICALLY-  
DAMAGED KID, WHO  
ARE CONVINCED I'M  
A SERIAL KILLER  
BECAUSE I'VE GOT  
A BRITISH ACCENT...

COLD... CLAMMY...  
CULTURE-SHOCKED--

I'M RUNNING OUT  
OF STEAM.



I'M TOO WIRED TO  
SLEEP-- BUT I  
CLOSE MY EYES TO  
CONCENTRATE ON  
MY HEADACHE  
WITHOUT VISUAL  
DISTRACTION.



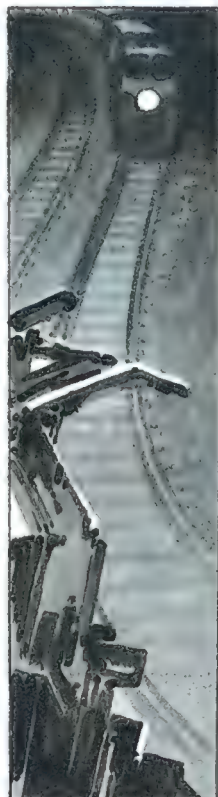
WE'RE BLOWING  
DOWN. MAYBE  
THEY'LL GET OFF  
HERE.



JEEZ,  
MOM... WATCH  
IT, WILL YA. YA  
CRUSHIN'  
ME.

I CAN'T  
HELP IT, ARTY.  
DARN TRAIN'S  
SWAYING SO  
MUCH.

AN' QUIT  
BLAS-  
PHEMIN'.



A TRAIN CRASHES  
SLOWLY IN MY GUT.  
MY BOWEL TWISTS  
IN SYMPATHY WITH  
THE RUINED STEEL  
OUTSIDE.

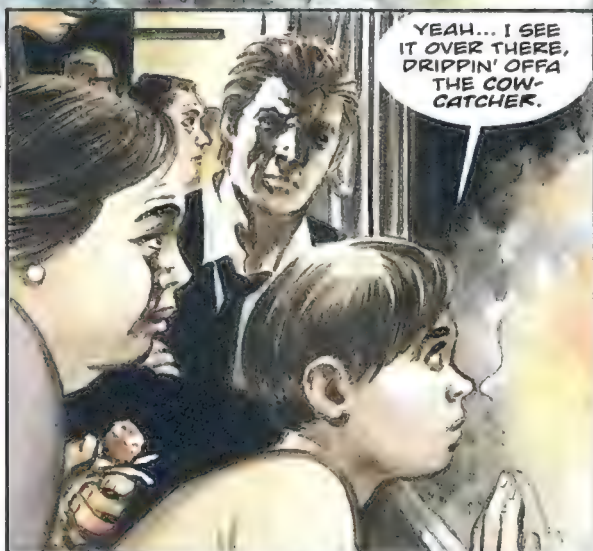




SHIT.  
LOOK AT THAT  
MESS!

WHAT'S  
A TRUCK DOIN'  
WAY OUT HERE?  
GOTTA BE FIFTEEN  
MILES FROM THE  
HIGHWAY...

DRIVER  
MUSTA LOST  
HIS  
MIND.



YEAH... I SEE  
IT OVER THERE,  
DRIPPIN' OFFA  
THE COW-  
CATCHER.



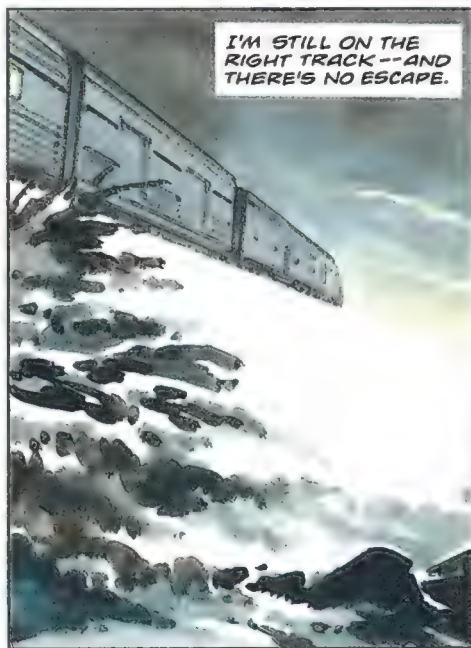
LIKE DEEP-SEA DIVERS,  
BUNDLED WORKERS  
MOVE SLOWLY AROUND  
THE WRECKAGE. AN  
INCONGRUOUS  
ACCIDENT -- BIZARRE,  
DISTURBING...



A STEEL SCREAM  
GOADS THE SOFT  
PAIN IN MY HEAD.

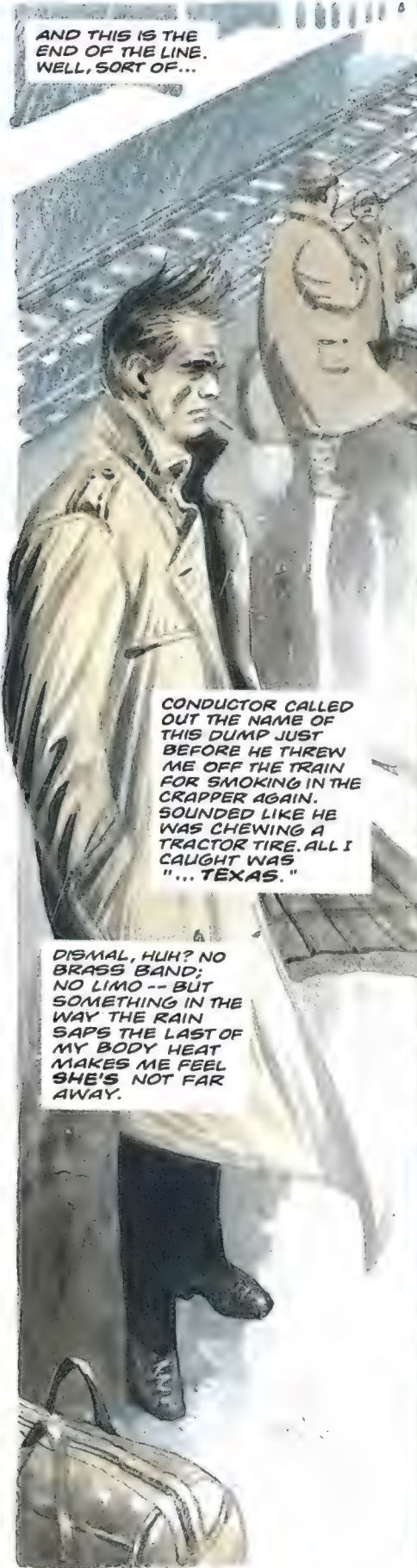


YEAH...  
OKAY... I  
GET IT!



I'M STILL ON THE  
RIGHT TRACK -- AND  
THERE'S NO ESCAPE.






AND THIS IS THE  
END OF THE LINE.  
WELL, SORT OF...


CONDUCTOR CALLED  
OUT THE NAME OF  
THIS DUMP JUST  
BEFORE HE THREW  
ME OFF THE TRAIN  
FOR SMOKING IN THE  
CRAPPER AGAIN.  
SOUNDED LIKE HE  
WAS CHEWING A  
TRACTOR TIRE. ALL I  
CAUGHT WAS  
"... TEXAS."

DISMAL, HUH? NO  
BRASS BAND;  
NO LIMO -- BUT  
SOMETHING IN THE  
WAY THE RAIN  
SAPS THE LAST OF  
MY BODY HEAT  
MAKES ME FEEL  
SHE'S NOT FAR  
AWAY.




SEE... I TOLDYA  
HE WOULDN'T BE  
HERE. YOU SHOULD'A  
LISTENED.

YOU'RE  
SO STUPID,  
MOM!

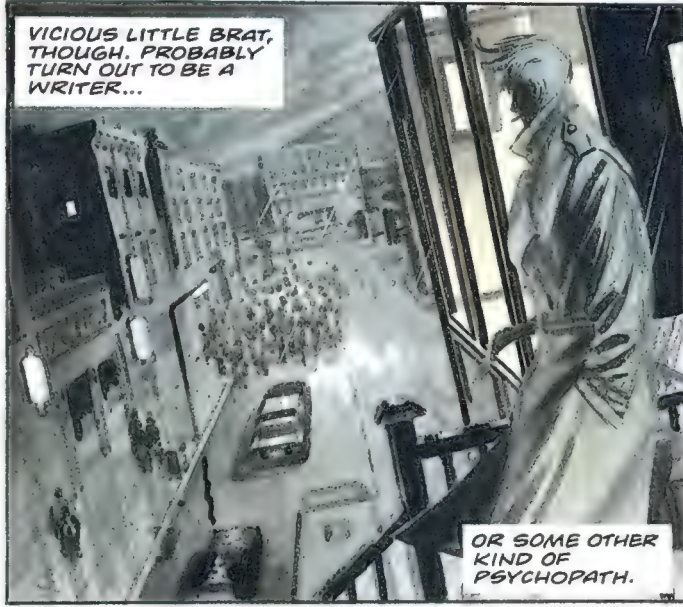


DON'T SAY  
THAT-- YOU...  
YOU LYIN'  
LITTLE  
WEASEL!

HE  
WILL TOO  
COME.



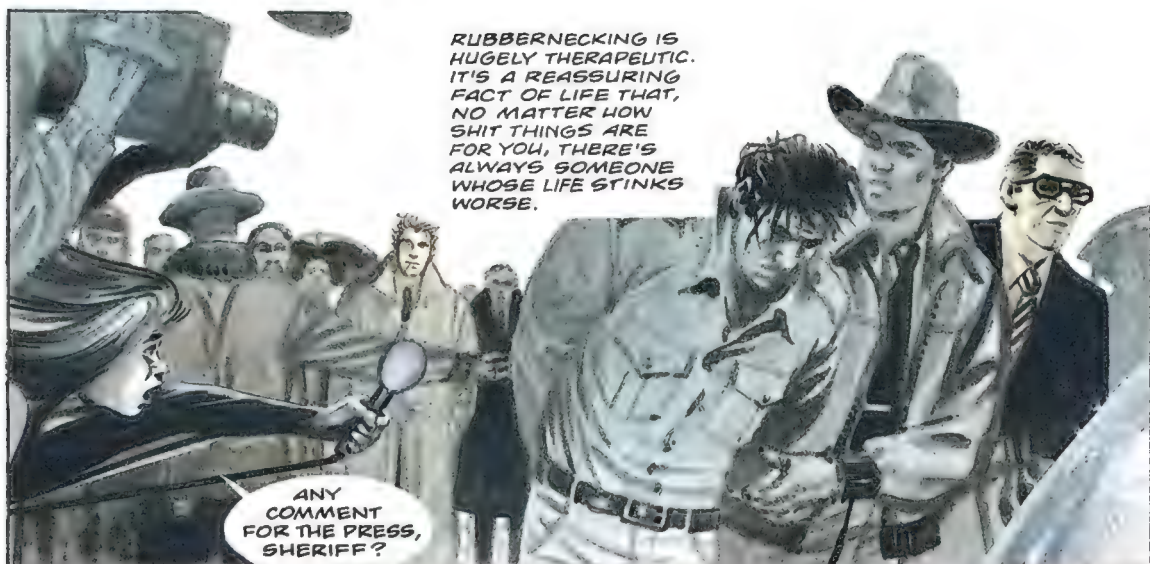
SURE,  
LADY--AND  
SHIT DON'T  
STINK!



VICIOUS LITTLE BRAT,  
THOUGH. PROBABLY  
TURN OUT TO BE A  
WRITER...

OR SOME OTHER  
KIND OF  
PSYCHOPATH.





RUBBERNECKING IS  
HUGELY THERAPEUTIC.  
IT'S A REASSURING  
FACT OF LIFE THAT,  
NO MATTER HOW  
SHIT THINGS ARE  
FOR YOU, THERE'S  
ALWAYS SOMEONE  
WHOSE LIFE STINKS  
WORSE.

ANY  
COMMENT  
FOR THE PRESS,  
SHERIFF?



WHAT DID  
HE DO?

KILLED  
HIS WIFE, TWO  
CHILDREN, AN'  
THEIR DOG--  
THEN TURNED  
HIMSELF IN.



WHAT  
MAKES A  
MAN THAT CRAZY  
INNA HEAD?



I WOULDN'T  
KNOW, PAL. I  
JUST GOT OFF  
THE TRAIN.

STRANGER,  
HUH? I'M JORGE...  
NEED A PLACE  
TO STAY?



"I CAN FIX YOU UP.  
QUIET, CLEAN ROOM  
...CABLE TV..."

"GIVE YOU A GOOD  
RATE, TOO. BEEN  
DOWN ON MY LUCK  
AN' A LONG WAY  
FROM HOME, MYSELF."



YOU BELIEVE  
I PAID TO GET  
THAT FIXED  
LAST  
WEEK!

SO,  
WHAT NAME  
DO YOU USE,  
COMPADRE?

CONSTANTINE.



YEAH... NICE  
QUIET ROOM,  
JORGE. GREAT  
VIEW.

WHAT THE FUCK,  
THOUGH... IT'LL  
DO TO WAIT IN.

I MEAN, I'VE MADE  
THE EFFORT--GONE  
MORE THAN HALF-  
WAY TO MEET HER...

NOW SHE'LL HAVE  
TO COME TO ME!

ONLY, MAKE IT  
SOON, ANGEL.  
THIS IS A  
SERIOUSLY  
WEIRD JONES.

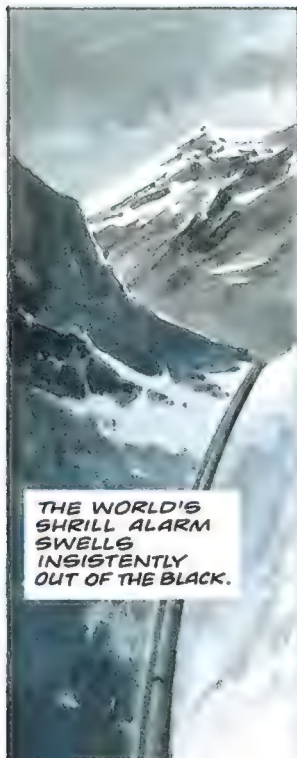
THE TIRED, ABUSED  
MATTRESS QUAKES  
BILIOUSLY. AS SOON  
AS I CLOSE MY  
EYES, HERS TRY TO  
SWALLOW ME.

TOO HUNGRY TO  
SLEEP, TOO TIRED  
TO EAT -- BRIEFLY,  
I CONSIDER  
MASTURBATION...

BUT A PASSING  
TRAIN DISTRACTS  
ME, HOWLING  
THROUGH MY  
HEAD...

AND I BURY MY-  
SELF TO WAIT--  
COLD, AND ALONE.





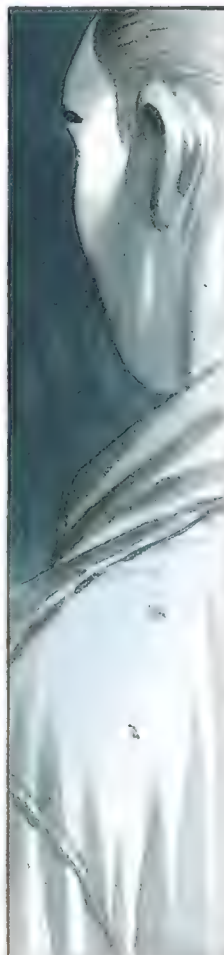
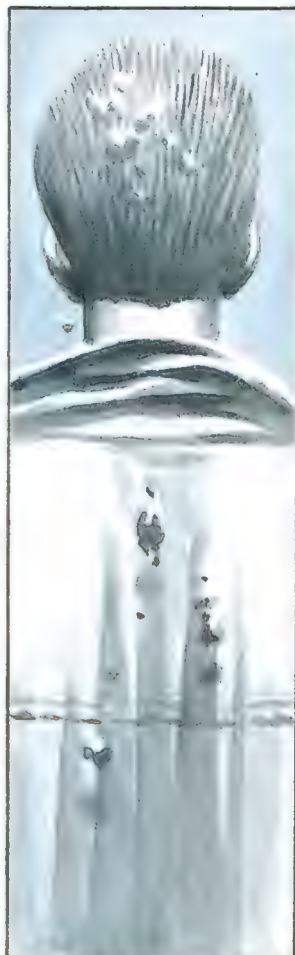
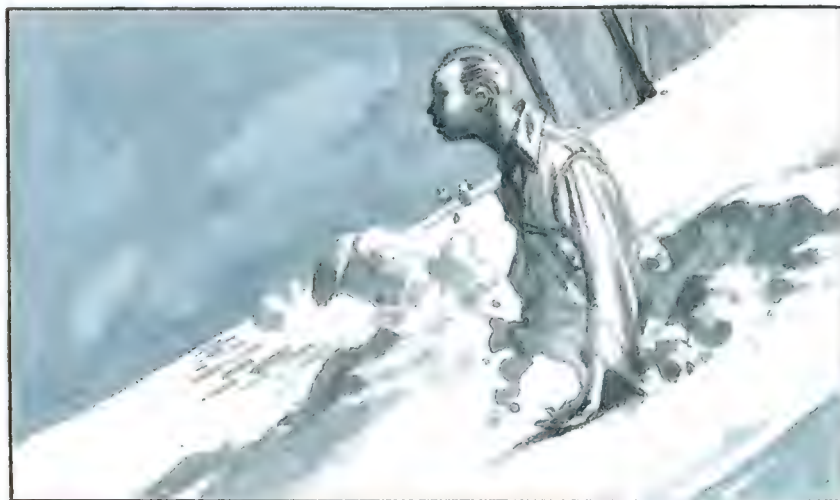
THE WORLD'S  
SHRILL ALARM  
SWELLS  
INSISTENTLY  
OUT OF THE BLACK.



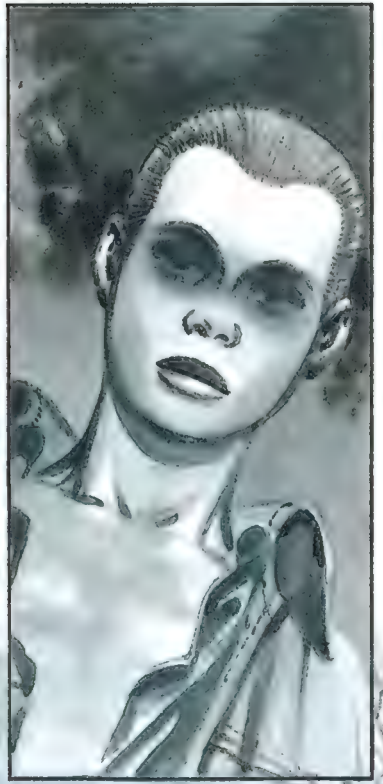
YOU WAKE--  
MELT-WATER  
SEEPING DOWN  
YOUR THROAT.  
IT TASTES OF  
TEARS.



SOMETHING IS  
DIFFERENT THIS  
TIME.



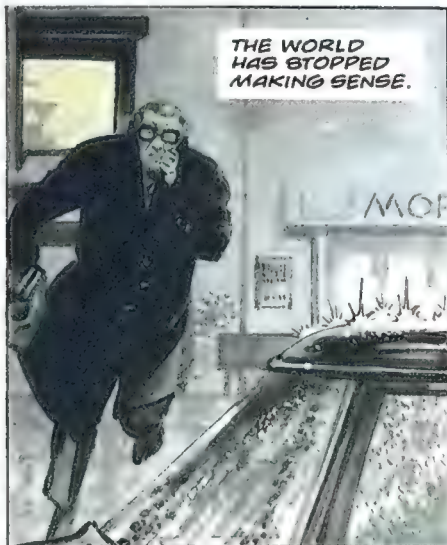




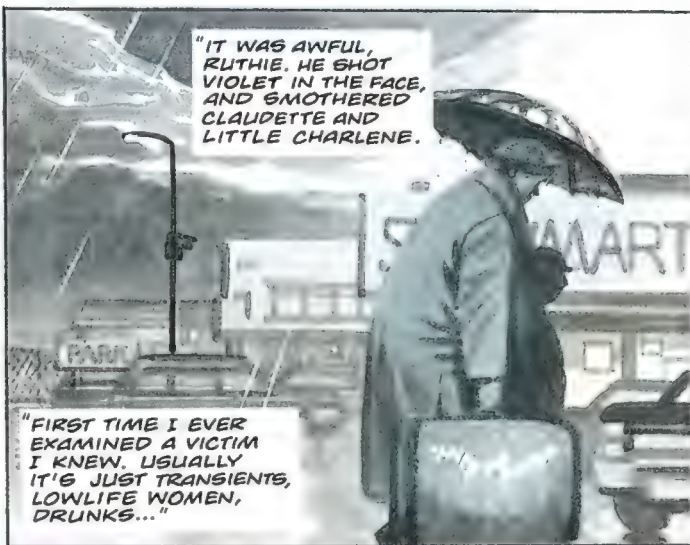
YOU HESITATE, DETAINED  
BY AN UNFAMILIAR  
NERVOUS ANTICIPATION.  
BUT IT'S A TOWN, NO  
DIFFERENT FROM ALL  
THE REST -- A PLACE  
WHERE PEOPLE LIVE.

YOU SHOULD GO AHEAD,  
VISIT THEM... PASS OVER  
THEM... GRACE THEM  
WITH YOUR PRESENCE.





THE WORLD  
HAS STOPPED  
MAKING SENSE.



"IT WAS AWFUL,  
RUTHIE. HE SHOT  
VIOLET IN THE FACE,  
AND SMOTHERED  
CLAUDETTE AND  
LITTLE CHARLENE.

"FIRST TIME I EVER  
EXAMINED A VICTIM  
I KNEW. USUALLY  
IT'S JUST TRANSIENTS,  
LOWLIFE WOMEN,  
DRUNKS..."



WHY'D HE  
DO IT?

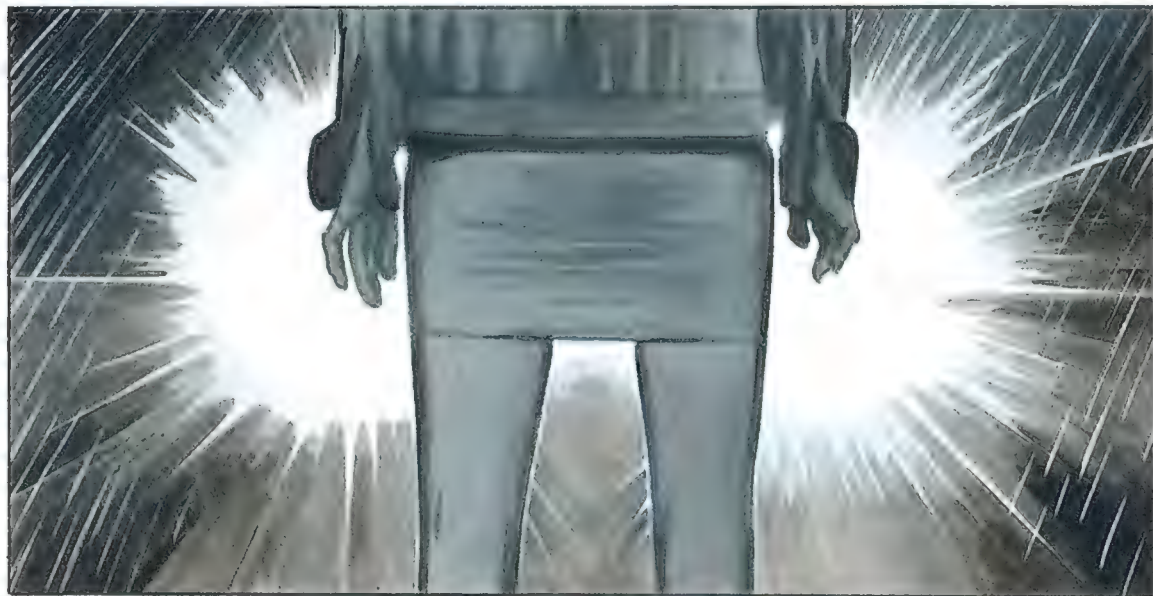
THE  
STRESSERS WERE  
OUR NEIGHBORS  
TWENTY YEARS, FOR  
CHRISAKES. I  
DELIVERED THOSE  
POOR CHILDREN.



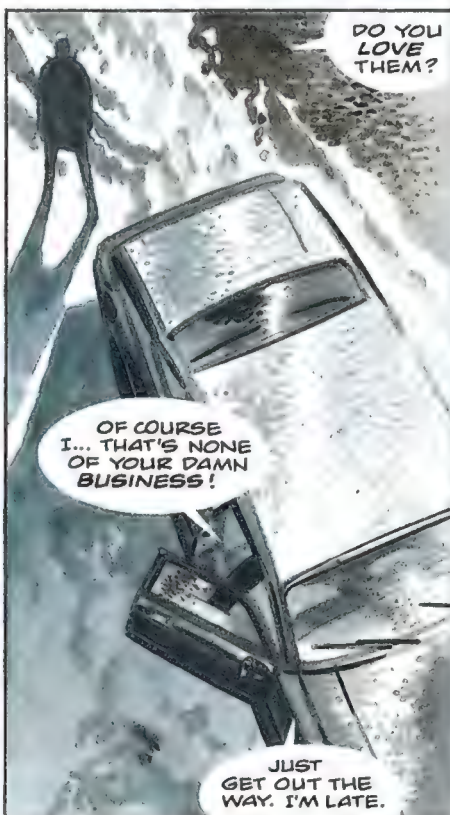
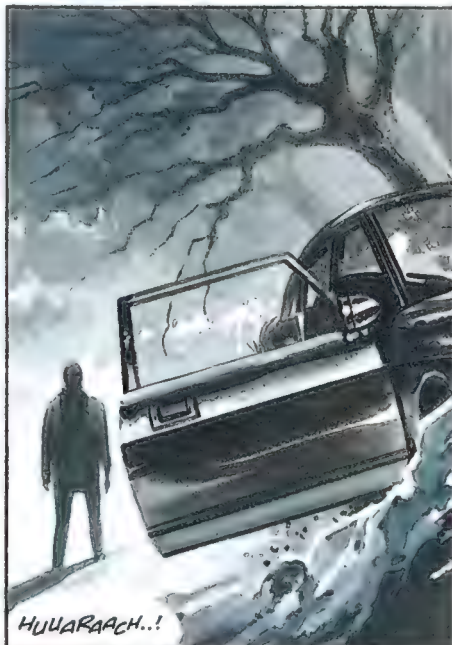
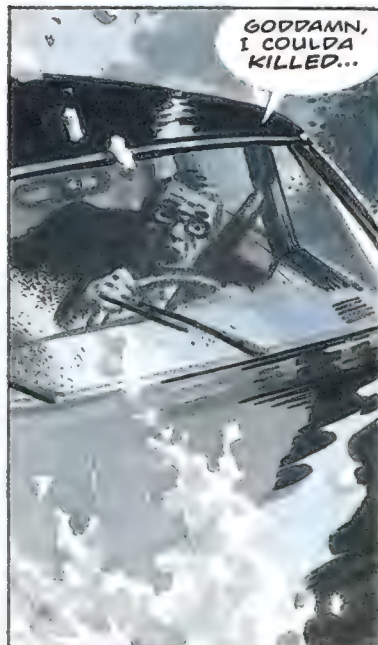
RON  
STRESSER WAS  
THE SHERIFF. RON  
STRESSER WAS MY  
FRIEND. IF SOMEONE  
LIKE HIM CAN DO  
AN INSANE THING  
LIKE THIS...



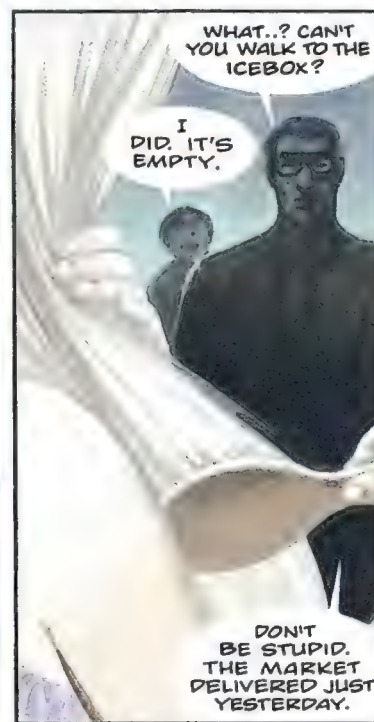
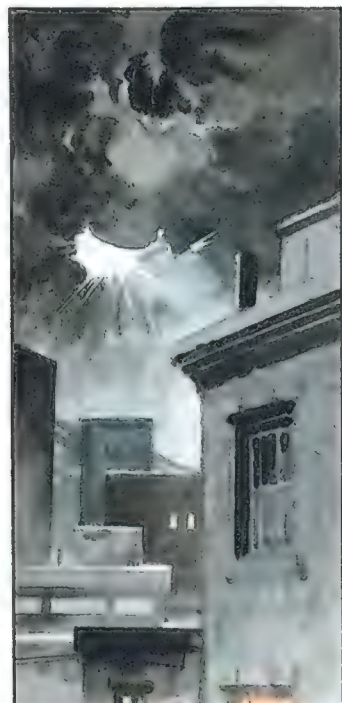
THEN SO  
CAN ANY  
ONE.













A BLEAK WIND HOWLS OUT OF SUDDEN EMPTY HOPELESSNESS. THE REFRIGERATOR MOTOR WHINES, LOUDER AND LOUDER...



HE'S OLD, AND SICK, AND COLD -- EXHAUSTED BY POVERTY. THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.



SHE LOOKS AT HIM THROUGH HER MOTHER'S EYES.



I'M SCARED, DAD. I'M HUNGRY... DO WE HAVE TO DIE, NOW?

SHE'S A WOMAN NOW. DOES SHE KNOW WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO?



HER SHOULDERS ARE THIN. SHE TREMBLES MINUTELY, LIKE A BIRD. HE WANTS TO WRAP HER, AND CRUSH HER TIGHTLY TO HIMSELF--



BUT HE LEADS HER SILENTLY OUTSIDE, LIKE A FATHER LEADS A BRIDE.



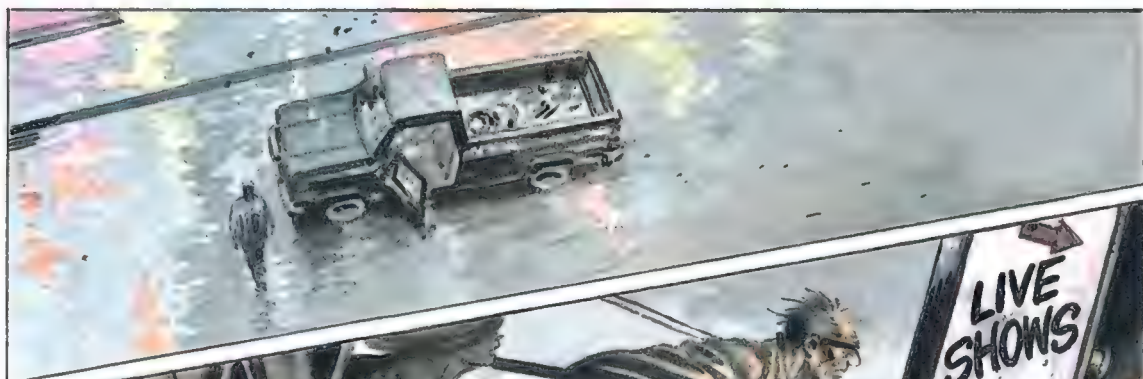
WE GOIN' TO THE MOVIES, DAD? WE GOIN' TO GET BURGERS?

WE GOIN' TO A BAR, DAD?



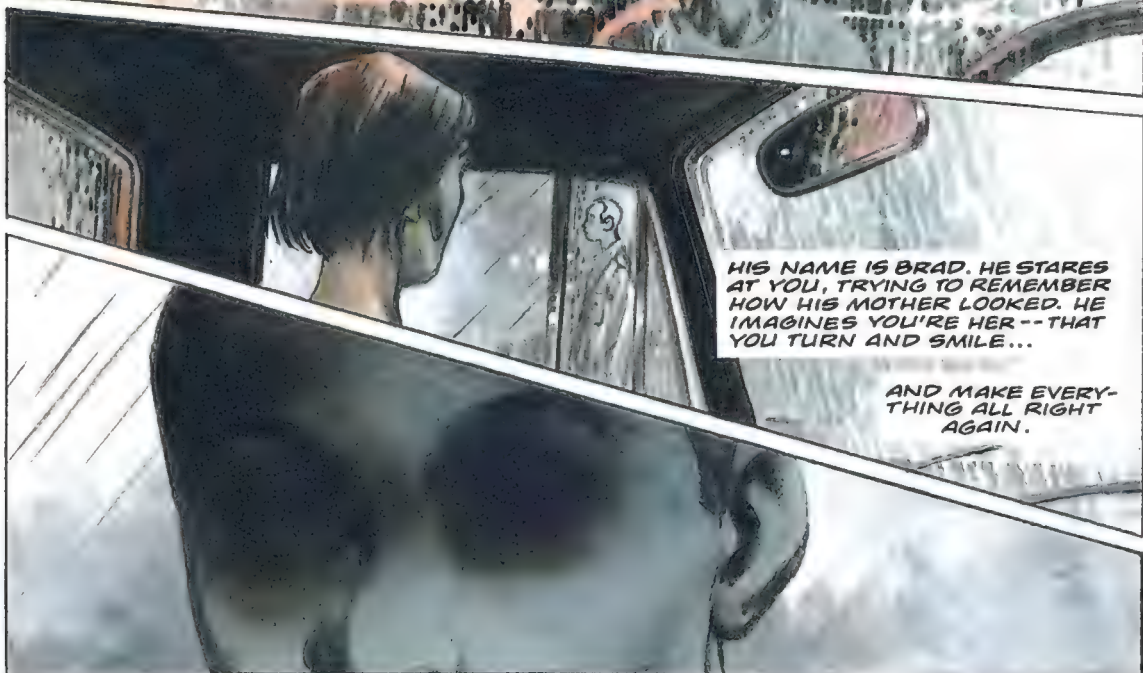
BE QUIET, BRAD. CAN'T YOU SEE DAD'S DRIVING...





DAD..?

SHUT  
UP, GIRL. DON'T  
SAY ANOTHER  
WORD.



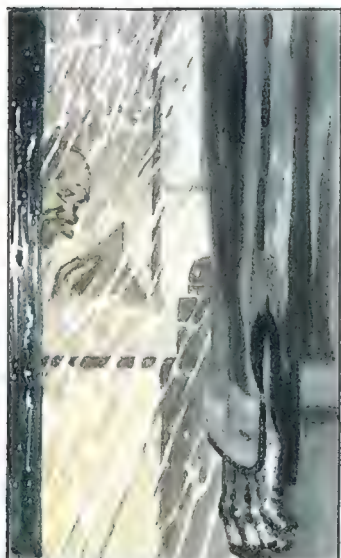
HIS NAME IS BRAD. HE STARES  
AT YOU, TRYING TO REMEMBER  
HOW HIS MOTHER LOOKED. HE  
IMAGINES YOU'RE HER--THAT  
YOU TURN AND SMILE...

AND MAKE EVERY-  
THING ALL RIGHT  
AGAIN.













SHIT!  
WHERE..?



SHE'S  
NEAR. I CAN  
PRACTICALLY  
SMELL HER.



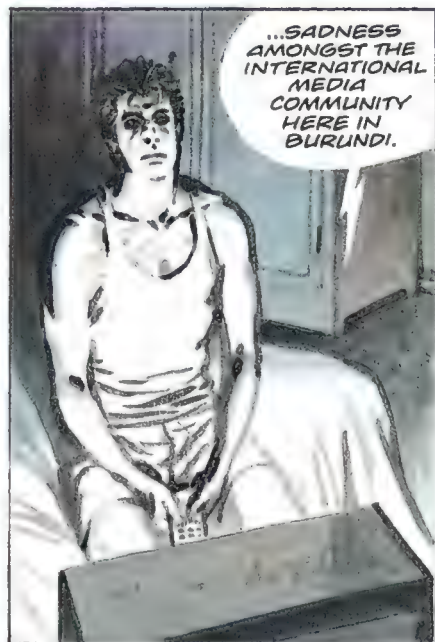
I'M HUNGRY. MY  
STOMACH FEELS  
LIKE A  
CLENCHED FIST.

BUT I CAN'T  
RISK MISSING  
HER BY GOING  
OUT FOR FOOD.



JESUS, THIS  
IS PATHETIC.  
STOP SHAKING,  
MAN. CALM  
DOWN.

WATCH SOME  
TV, AND GET  
A GRIP ON GOOD  
OLD CRASS  
REALITY  
AGAIN.



...SADNESS  
AMONGST THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
MEDIA  
COMMUNITY  
HERE IN  
BURUNDI.

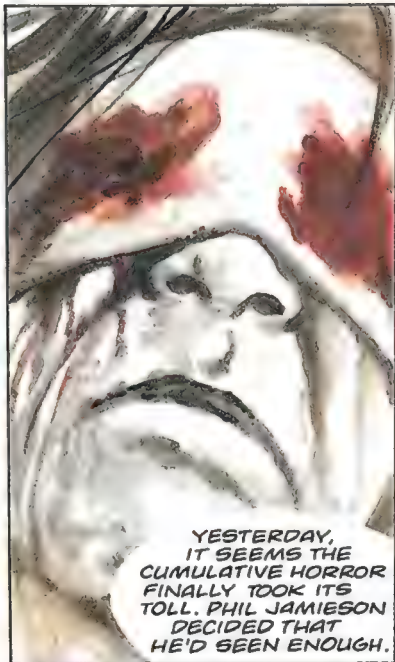




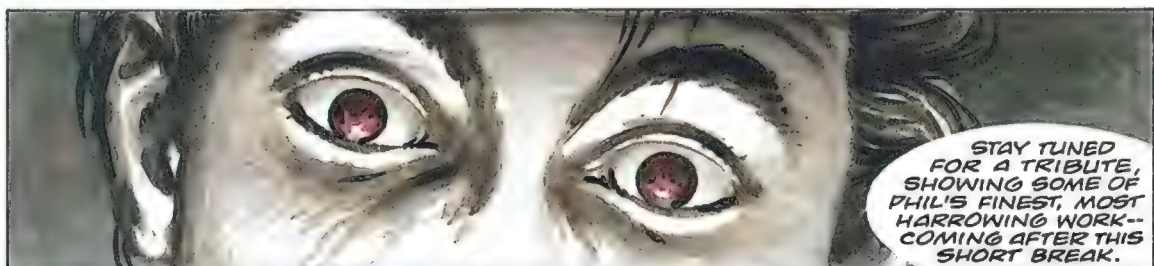
THE DAILY COMMON-PLACE OF TRAGEDY AND ATROCITY WHICH WE WITNESS AND REPORT IS SOMETHING WHICH WE ALL FIND DIFFICULT TO COME TO TERMS WITH.



PHOTOGRAPHER PHIL JAMIESON HAS SEEN MORE THAN HIS SHARE OF APPALLING HUMAN SUFFERING. HE BEGAN HIS CAREER IN VIETNAM IN THE 'SIXTIES -- THERE HAS RARELY BEEN A WAR ZONE SINCE WHICH HE HAS NOT VISITED.



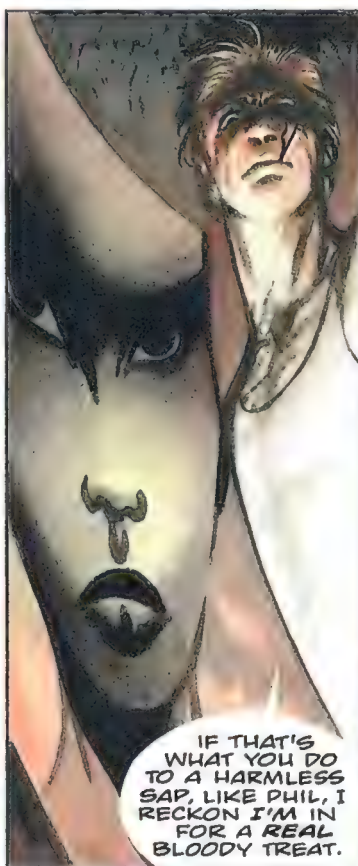
YESTERDAY, IT SEEMS THE CUMULATIVE HORROR FINALLY TOOK ITS TOLL. PHIL JAMIESON DECIDED THAT HE'D SEEN ENOUGH.



STAY TUNED FOR A TRIBUTE, SHOWING SOME OF PHIL'S FINEST, MOST HARROWING WORK-- COMING AFTER THIS SHORT BREAK.



OH YEAH... VERY FUCKIN' POETIC!

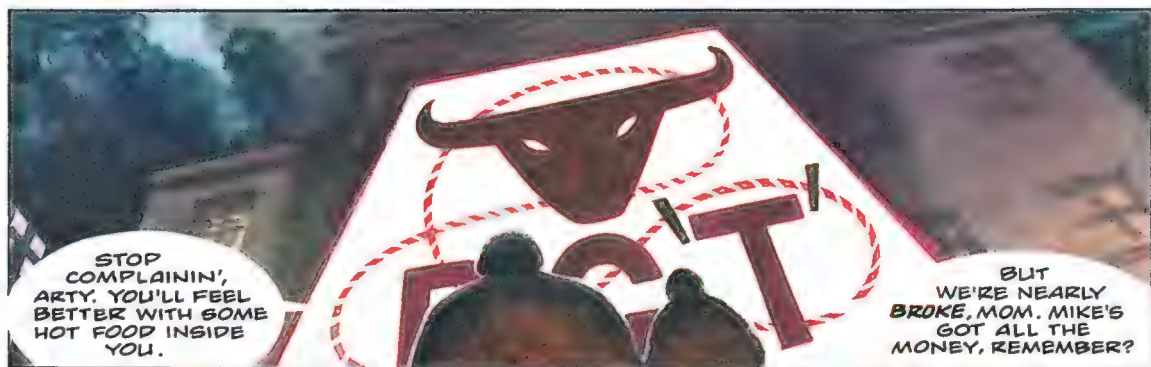


IF THAT'S WHAT YOU DO TO A HARMLESS SAP, LIKE PHIL, I RECKON I'M IN FOR A REAL BLOODY TREAT.



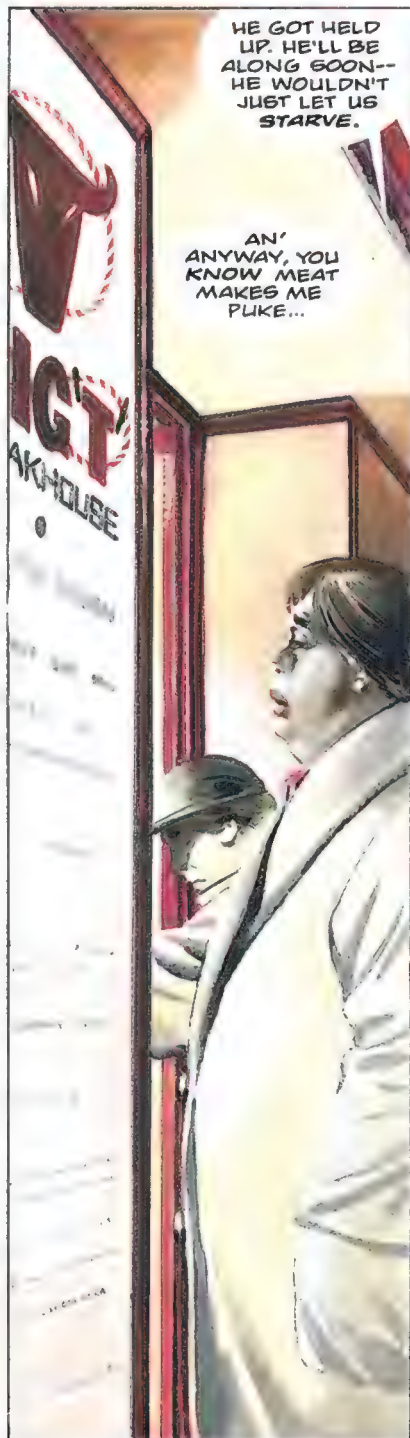
TIME TO STOP DANCING AROUND NOW, ANGEL. LET'S GET DOWN TO IT.





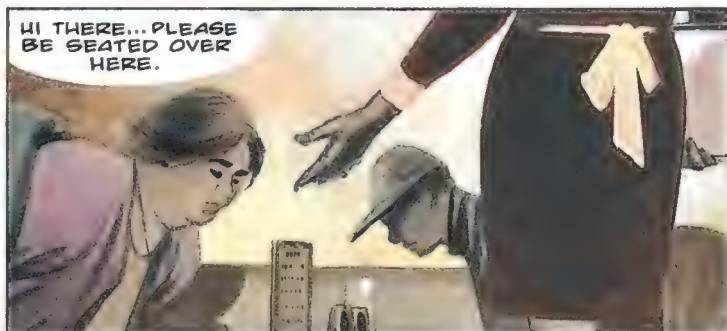
STOP  
COMPLAININ',  
ARTY. YOU'LL FEEL  
BETTER WITH SOME  
HOT FOOD INSIDE  
YOU.

BUT  
WE'RE NEARLY  
BROKE, MOM. MIKE'S  
GOT ALL THE  
MONEY, REMEMBER?



WE GOT HELD  
UP. HE'LL BE  
ALONG SOON--  
HE WOULDN'T  
JUST LET US  
STARVE.

AN'  
ANYWAY, YOU  
KNOW MEAT  
MAKES ME  
PUKE...



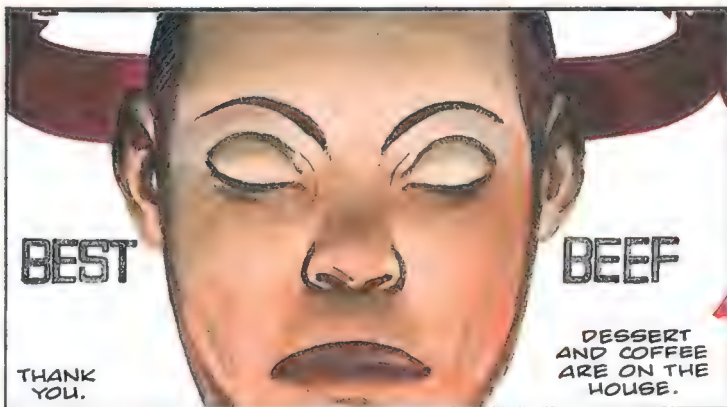
HI THERE... PLEASE  
BE SEATED OVER  
HERE.



WE'LL TAKE THE  
STEAKS-- BIG  
ONES, MEDIUM  
RARE... WITH FRIES  
...AN' COKE...



AN' TWO LARGE  
SALADS ON THE  
SIDE.



BEST

BEEF

THANK  
YOU.

DESSERT  
AND COFFEE  
ARE ON THE  
HOUSE.



THAT LOOKS SO GOOD, HONEY.  
I GOT AN EMPTINESS INSIDE ME  
AS BIG AS ALL OUTDOORS.  
HOWEVER MUCH I EAT, IT AIN'T  
ENOUGH TO SATISFY,  
Y'KNOW?



THERE'S  
NOT ENOUGH  
FOOD IN THE  
WORLD.

SHE  
OUGHTA EAT  
HERSELF.

YOU DON'T DIG  
INTO THAT SOON,  
ARTY, I'M GONNA  
START ON IT.



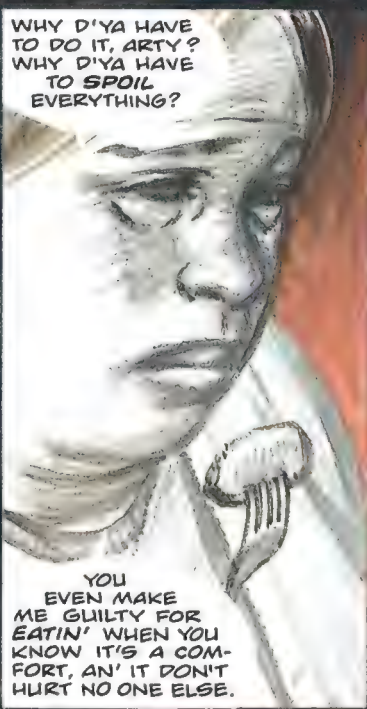
TOLDYA  
I DIDN'T WANT  
IT... WAS A  
WASTE ORDERIN'  
IT.

HEY... THAT  
SQUEALIN' SOUND  
LIKE BUS-BRAKES  
TO YOU? MAYBE  
MIKE'S PULLIN' IN  
AT LAST.



I ALREADY  
TOLDYA... HE'S  
NOT GONNA  
COME, MOM.

WHY D'YA HAVE  
TO DO IT, ARTY?  
WHY D'YA HAVE  
TO SPOIL  
EVERYTHING?



YOU  
EVEN MAKE  
ME GUILTY FOR  
EATIN' WHEN YOU  
KNOW IT'S A COM-  
FORT, AN' IT DON'T  
HURT NO ONE ELSE.

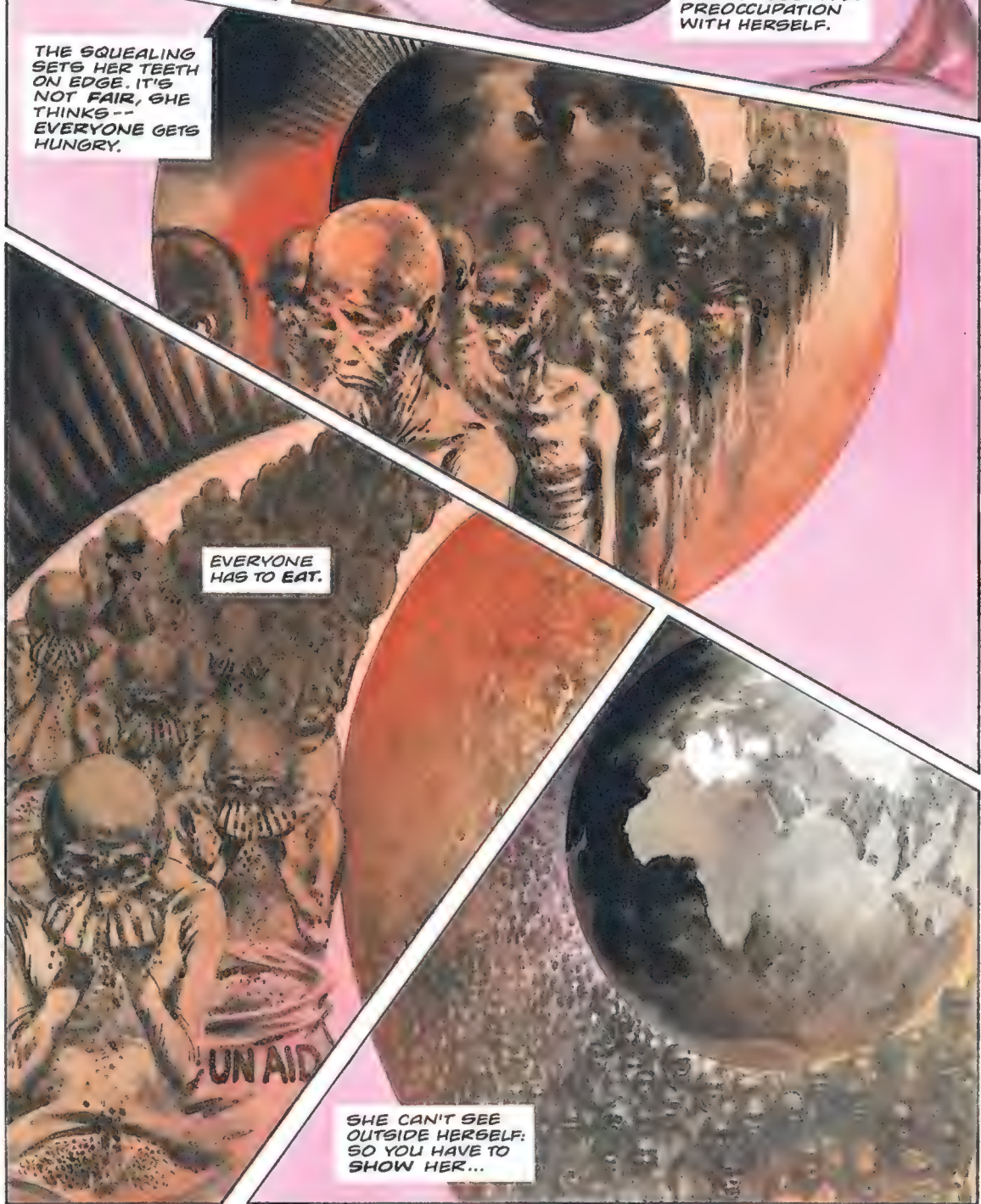






SHE CHEWS: YOU  
TASTE THE BITTER-  
NESS SHE  
SWALLOWS... THE  
BLIND, RESENTFUL  
PREOCCUPATION  
WITH HERSELF.

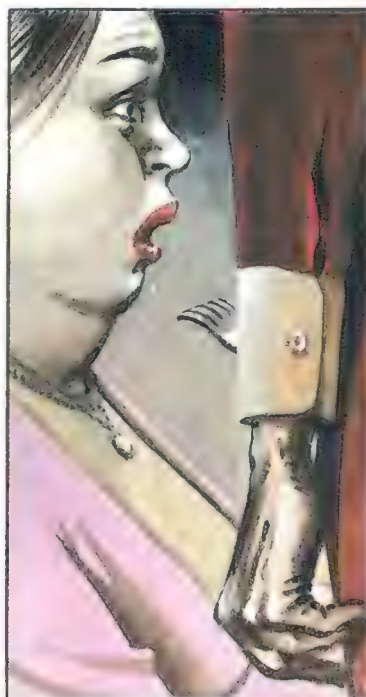
THE SQUEALING  
SETS HER TEETH  
ON EDGE. IT'S  
NOT FAIR, SHE  
THINKS--  
EVERYONE GETS  
HUNGRY.




EVERYONE  
HAS TO EAT.

SHE CAN'T SEE  
OUTSIDE HERSELF:  
SO YOU HAVE TO  
SHOW HER...










COME  
WITH ME. I'LL  
SHOW YOU WHERE  
IT IS.



BUT THERE ARE NO  
BATHROOMS WHERE  
YOU TAKE HIM -- NO  
ROOMS TO SHELTER  
YOU AT ALL. YOUR  
LIVES ARE WIND-  
BLOWN AND  
TRAMPLED IN THE  
STREET, LIKE TRASH.  
LIKE TRASH, YOU'RE  
SWEEPED UP AFTER  
DARK.



RUN!







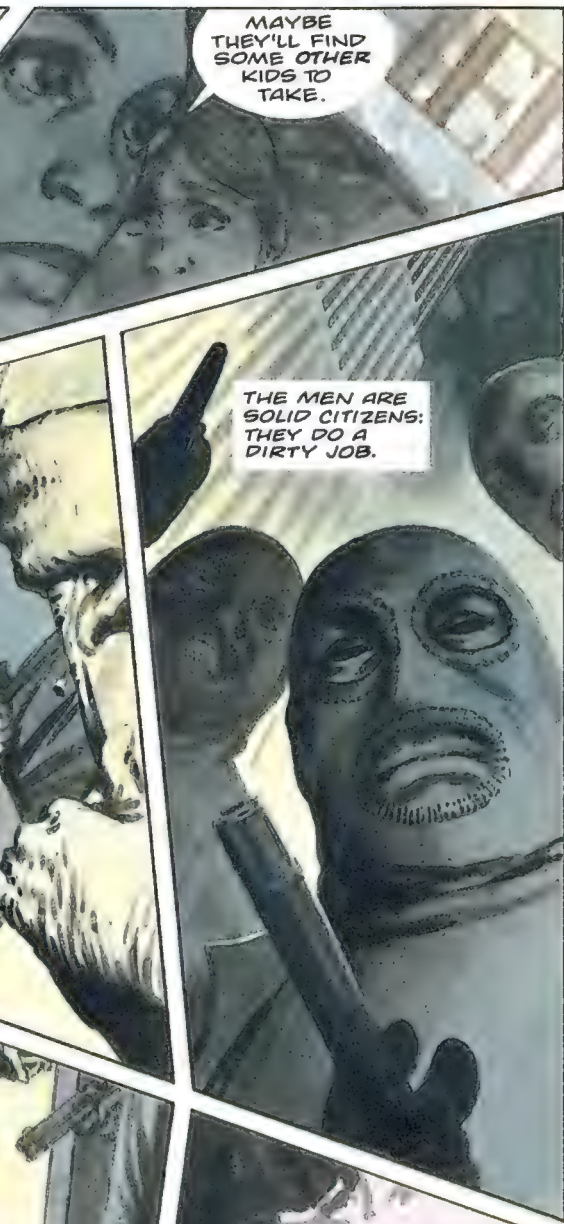
ARE THEY  
GOING TO  
CATCH  
US?



KEEP  
QUIET.



BUT SOMEONE HAS TO  
HAVE A SENSE OF CIVIC  
PRIDE -- AND KEEP  
VERMIN LIKE YOU FROM  
OFFENDING TOURISTS  
AND SPOILING TRADE.



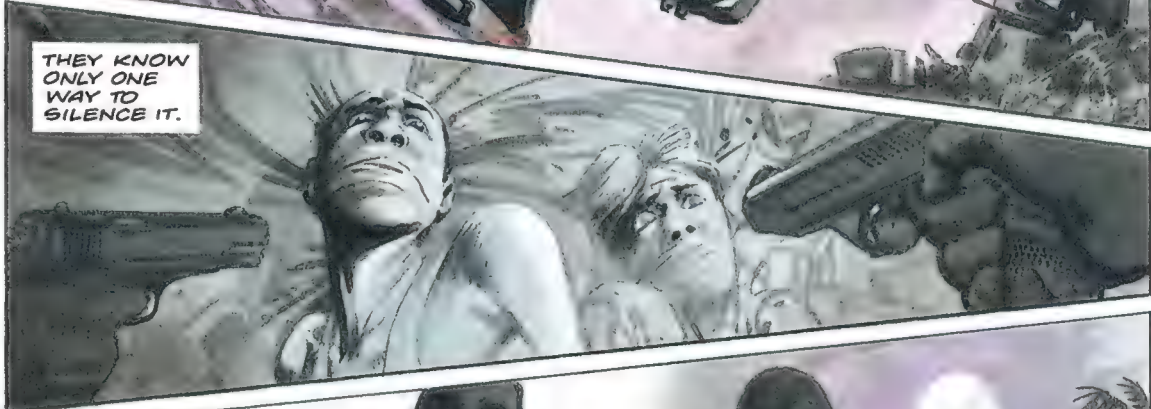
MAYBE  
THEY'LL FIND  
SOME OTHER  
KIDS TO  
TAKE.

THE MEN ARE  
SOLID CITIZENS:  
THEY DO A  
DIRTY JOB.



YOUR BROTHER MAKES A  
HARSH, HIGH WHINING IN  
HIS THROAT, AND PISSES  
ON THE VAN'S COLD FLOOR.

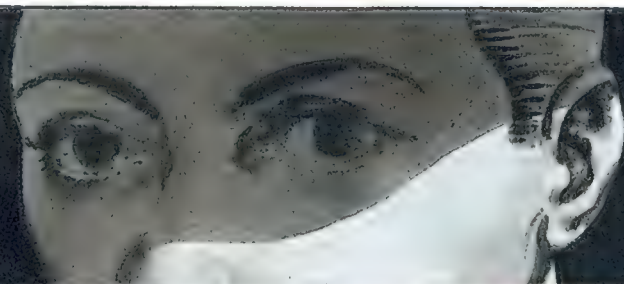








BUT A TEMPORARY  
DEAFNESS IS NOT  
THE SAME AS PEACE.  
ONCE HEARD, THE  
TERRIBLE WHINE OF  
HELPLESS FEAR WILL  
NEVER LEAVE THE EARS.



STOP IT,  
DAMN YOU!

TURN OFF  
THAT FUCKIN'  
NOISE!



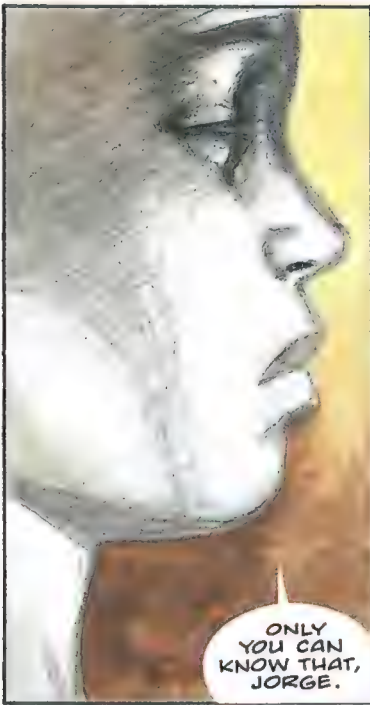
DIOS  
MÍO! ¿QUE..?



HE SCRAPES FOR  
THE TRUTH. RANK  
GARBAGE CRUMBLES,  
REVEALING LIMP  
DISCARDED CORPSES  
OF INDIFFERENCE.

COULD  
I DO THAT--  
HUNT CHILDREN  
ON THE STREETS,  
KILL THEM  
WITH A GUN..?





ONLY  
YOU CAN  
KNOW THAT,  
JORGE.



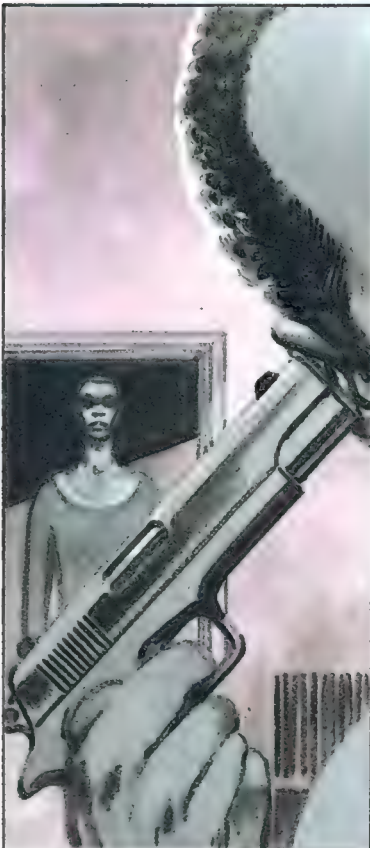
STOP IT! I  
CAN'T TAKE IT  
ANYMORE!



PLEASE...  
JUST STOP  
THAT  
DREADFUL  
SCREAMING...



I CAN'T. YOU  
HAVE TO DO IT  
FOR  
YOURSELF.



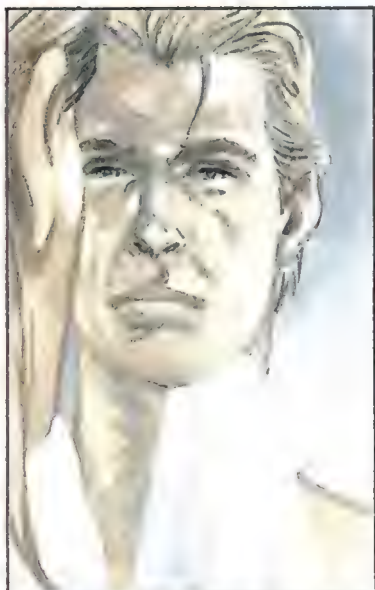
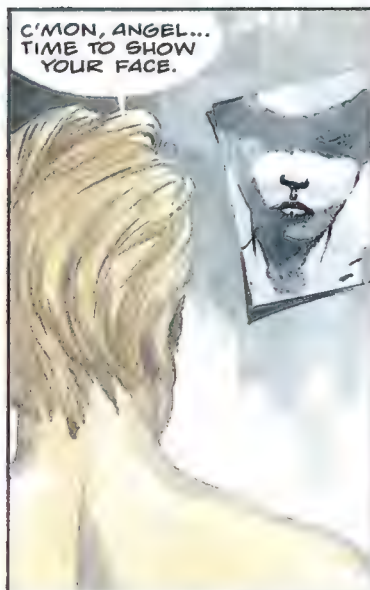
ABRUPT IN THE VACUUM  
CLEANER'S MUFFLED  
MOANING, THE GUNSHOT  
JERKS MY REFLEXES,  
MAKES ME NEARLY  
CUT MY BLOODY THROAT.



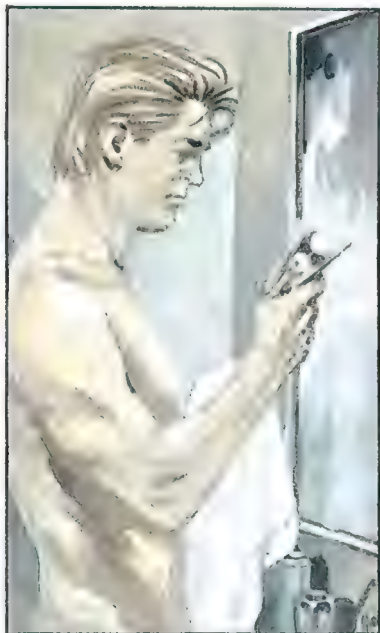
I TRY TO SHRUG IT OFF.  
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO  
BE SIGNIFICANT --  
AFTER ALL, THIS IS  
TEXAS...

BUT I FINISH MY  
ABLUTIONS WITH A  
TREMBLING HAND,  
LISTENING TO THE  
CLEANER WORKING  
NEARER DOWN THE  
HALL.





THE WAIL OF THE VACUUM CLEANER DIMINISHES, LIKE A FALLING BOMB...

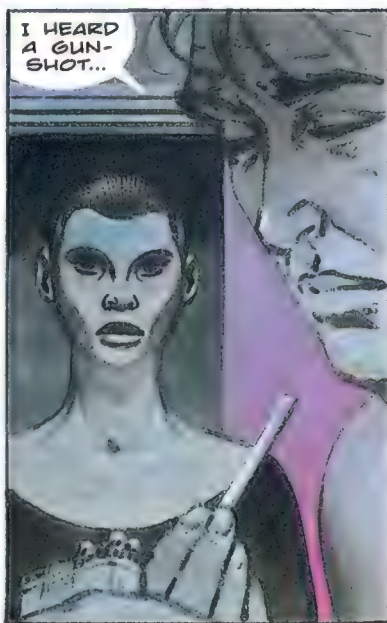
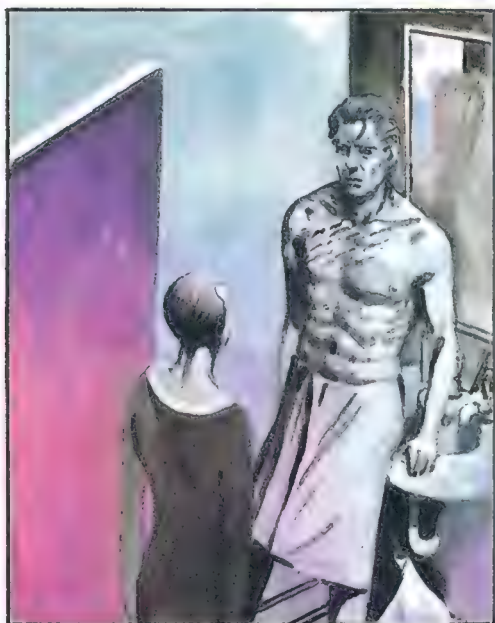
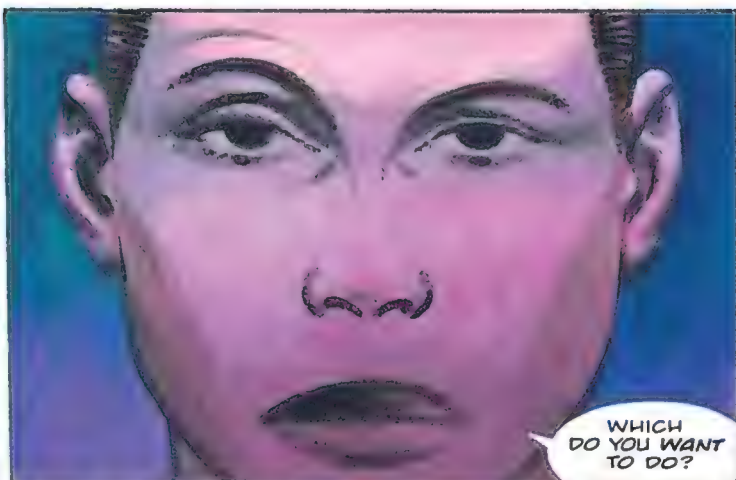


... EVENTUALLY EXPLODING A SILENT ICE-FLOWER OF EXCITEMENT IN THE REGION OF MY PINEAL GLAND.

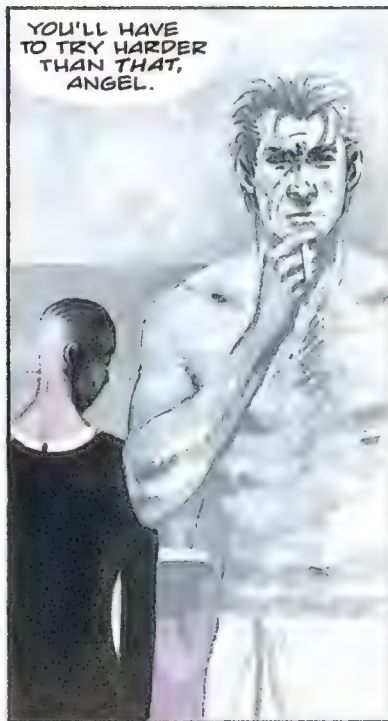
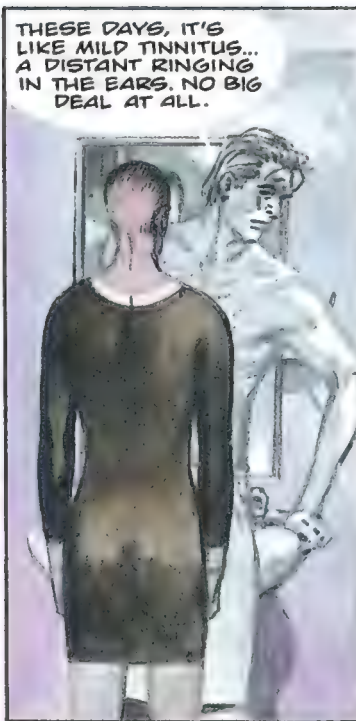
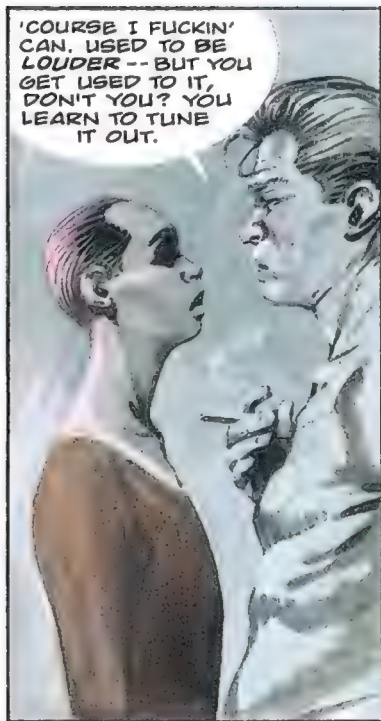
















THEY  
DON'T DO IT  
FOR ME,  
ANYMORE.



YOU'RE  
LONELY.



MOST PEOPLE ARE  
AFRAID OF MISERY  
AND PAIN. THEY'RE  
HAPPIEST WHEN THE  
BAD STUFF HAPPENS  
FAR AWAY FROM  
THEM.

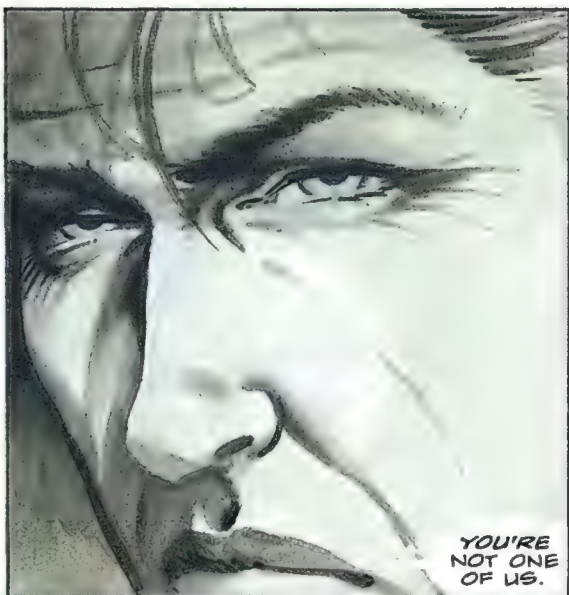
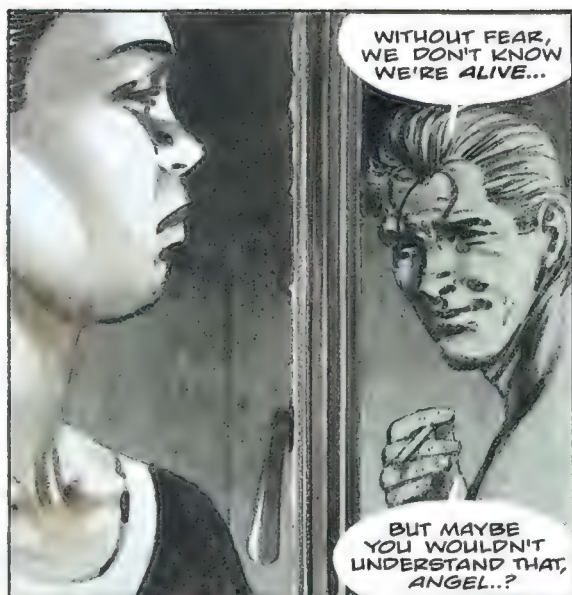
WELL,  
CALL ME  
KINKY-- BUT  
I NEED AN  
EDGE.

FEAR'S  
THE FUEL  
THAT DRIVES  
THE HUMAN  
ENGINE, INNIT?



IT'S  
WHAT KEEPS  
US UGLY,  
SELFISH SCUM-  
BAGS GOING.









I EXIST. I MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD, AND SHARE MY EXPERIENCE WITH ANYONE I MEET.

BIG OF YOU.

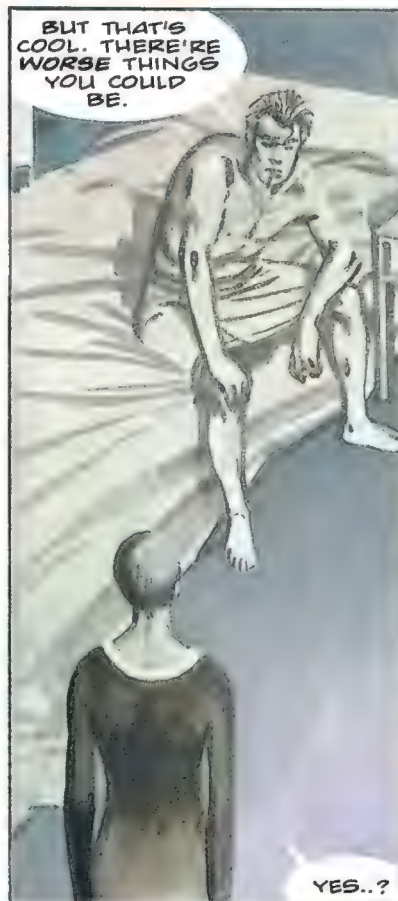


I LET THEM KNOW THAT WHAT THEY DO TO OTHERS, EVEN BY NEGLECT, THEY DO, ULTIMATELY, TO THEMSELVES--

YEAH, YEAH... LEAVE IT OUT, ANGEL...

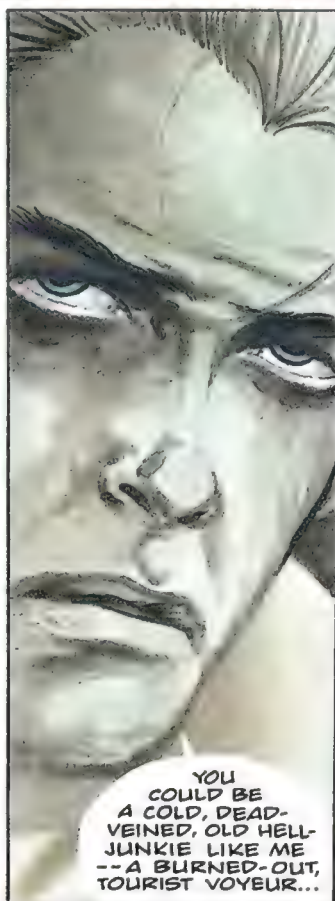


I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE... YOU'RE A BLEEDIN' HORRORIST -- A REDISTRIBUTOR OF SUFFERING, PERPETRATING REVOLUTIONARY OUTRAGE IN THE COZY HEARTLANDS OF OPPRESSION AND COMPLACENCY!

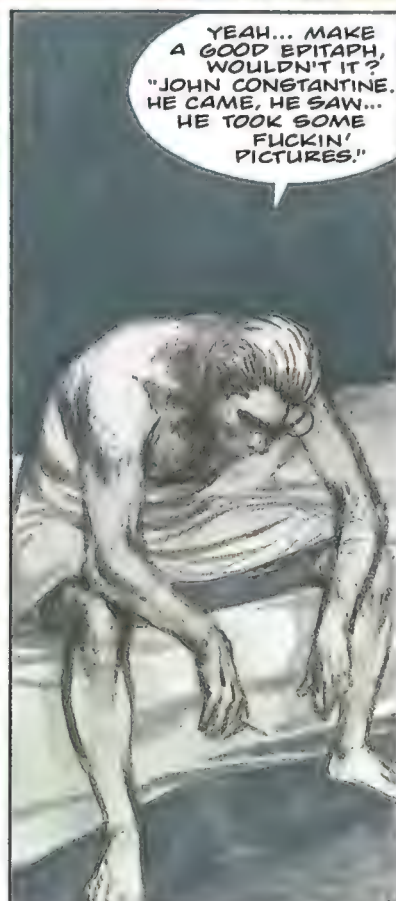


BUT THAT'S COOL. THERE'RE WORSE THINGS YOU COULD BE.

YES..?

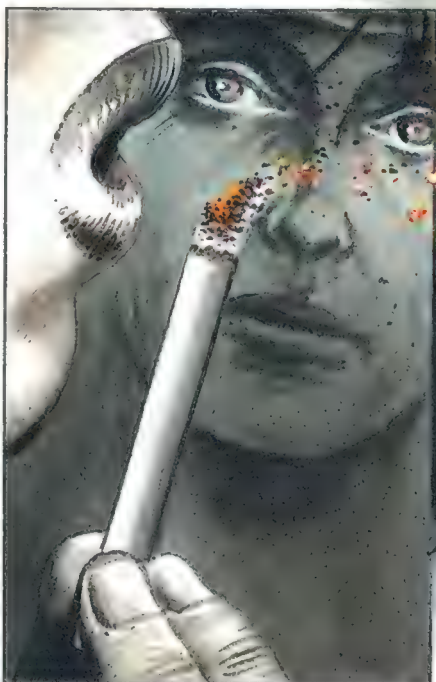


YOU COULD BE A COLD, DEAD-VEINED, OLD HELL-JUNKIE LIKE ME -- A BURNED-OUT, TOURIST VOYEUR...




YEAH... MAKE A GOOD EPITAPH, WOULDN'T IT? "JOHN CONSTANTINE. HE CAME, HE SAW... HE TOOK SOME FUCKIN' PICTURES."










AND THE DEAD WORLD SHUDDERS AS  
A DEEP, DULL-THROBBING TUMOR  
BURSTS... SPLITS... ERUPTS... SWOLLEN  
TENSION LANCED BY HOT LIGHT...  
NECROTIC TISSUE EXCISED BY A TURBU-  
LENT PASSION OF SCREAMING FIRE...




WHAT'S  
HAPPENING?

MORTAR  
ATTACK. THE  
MILITIA ARE  
FIGHTING  
AGAIN.



YOU'RE  
BLEEDING.




YOU ARE  
TOO.

SHIT...









NOW,  
UNCOVER  
YOURSELF.


I THOUGHT  
I ALREADY  
HAD.



NO, DO  
IT PROPERLY  
--LIKE ME.




COLD FIRE  
SCREAMS  
ACROSS  
OUR RAW  
EXPOSURE.



WE TOUCH. WE WOUND  
EACH OTHER --AND A  
FIERCE EMPATHY  
INFECTS OUR BLOOD.

TOGETHER IN  
PASSIONATE AGONY,  
WE TASTE THE BITTER  
SEEPING OF THE  
WORLD'S PATHOLOGY.





FIERCE LIQUOR  
ROARING IN MY  
HEAD... FIRE  
SHADOWS  
DANCING AROUND  
A SICK PUNGENCY  
OF BURNING  
FLESH...

I WATCH MY  
COMRADES RAPE  
HER, TURN ABOUT...

...THEN BARE MY  
TEETH, MATCH  
DISGUST WITH LUST,  
AND POUR  
AGGRESSION'S  
GUILTY RAGE INTO  
HER DARK SUCKING  
EMPTINESS.

SHE GIVES BIRTH TO  
ME IN A DRY TIME.

MY FATHER IS  
FIGHTING  
SOMEWHERE IN  
THE NORTH.

THERE IS  
NO FOOD.





I SUCK.

HER BREASTS  
ARE DEAD  
THINGS,  
WITHERING ON  
HER CHEST.

THERE IS  
NO FOOD.

SHE PRESSES MY  
FACE GENTLY TO  
HER SKIN.

I TREMBLE AND  
STOP SUCKING.

OUTSIDE, IN THE  
DRY TIME, THE  
WOMEN ARE  
KEENING.

THERE IS  
NO FOOD.

ALL QUIET IN THE  
BEDROOM NOW.  
MAYBE IT'S SAFE  
TO SNEAK IN AN'  
SEE IF MOMMA'S  
STILL GOT A DOL-  
LAR IN HER JEANS.

HER AN' RAY  
WERE PIPIN'...


THEN SHE WAS  
SCREAMING HE'D  
SMOKED THE  
LAST ROCK...

I FALL TOWARDS  
A VOID OF  
HUNGRY HURT...

MOMMA PULLS ME  
TO HER, TIGHT...  
ROCKING.

HER SKINNY RIBS  
DENT MY FACE. I  
CAN'T CATCH A  
BREATH...





SHE TELLS ME  
EVERYTHING I  
WANT TO KNOW.

BUT I HAVEN'T  
FINISHED YET.

I NEED TO HEAR  
HER MOAN, AND  
SEE HER TWITCH  
AND FLEX.

THERE'S MORE  
INSIDE... I KNOW  
THERE'S MORE...

I WANT IT.

THEY KICK DOWN  
MY DOOR AT DAWN.


SHE TOLD THEM.  
THEY HURT HER  
AND SHE TOLD  
THEM.

IN THE  
DARKNESS,  
I LOVE HER.

IN THE  
DARKNESS,  
I HATE HER.

IN THE DARKNESS, I  
STRUGGLE TO REMEMBER  
HER AS PAIN EXPLODES  
MY WORLD, AND  
TERROR FLINGS ME  
HOWLING DOWN THE  
STAIRS...





... INTO THE BLIND  
DUNGEON WHERE  
SHE WAITS FOR ME,  
AMONGST THE  
ABUSED AND FOR-  
GOTTEN HUMAN  
MAJORITY, WHO  
STRUGGLE AND  
SUFFER, AND WAIT  
IMPATIENTLY TO DIE.

I HAVE TO  
GET CLOSER  
... DEEPER.

I CLAMBER AND HEAVE,  
CLAW AND SQUIRM  
THROUGH THE SWEATING,  
GASPING GARBAGE-  
MOUNTAIN OF THE  
EXPLOITED AND  
DISPOSSESSED.

I BREATHE DISEASE  
AND TASTE STARVATION  
... EMBRACE HUMILIATION  
AND CARESS DEFEAT.

I TOUCH THE TRAGEDY  
OF HUMANITY, AND  
HUMANITY TOUCHES ME  
BACK... PUSHES AN  
ELECTRIC FINGER UP  
MY ASS... JUMP-  
STARTS MY HEART...

I PANIC, STRUGGLE,  
AND THEN SUBMIT.  
SHE DRAGS ME TO  
HER WITH A BILLION  
HANDS...

DRAGS ME INSIDE  
HER... ABSORBS ME,  
AND FILLS ME WITH  
HER CHURNING,  
DESPERATE PASSION  
TO BE HEARD.

SHE KILLS ME, AND  
BRINGS ME BACK TO  
LIFE -- AND I HOWL  
WITH ECSTATIC AGONY...

MY VOICE ROARING FROM  
A VAST CHOIR OF SYMPA-  
THETIC THROATS, RISING  
FAINTLY TO ASSAIL THE  
NUMB, DEAF WORLD ABOVE.

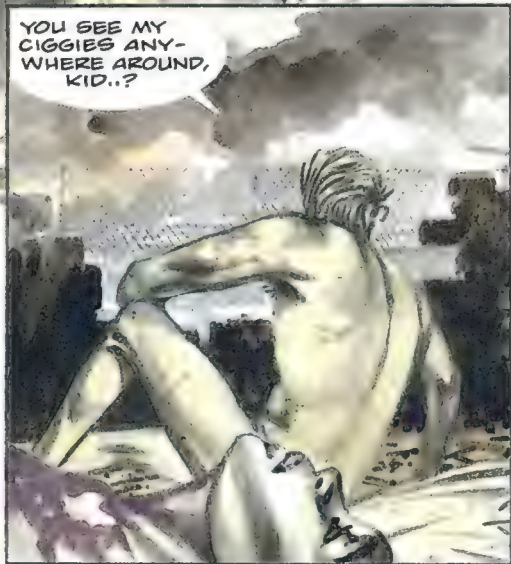




AH!



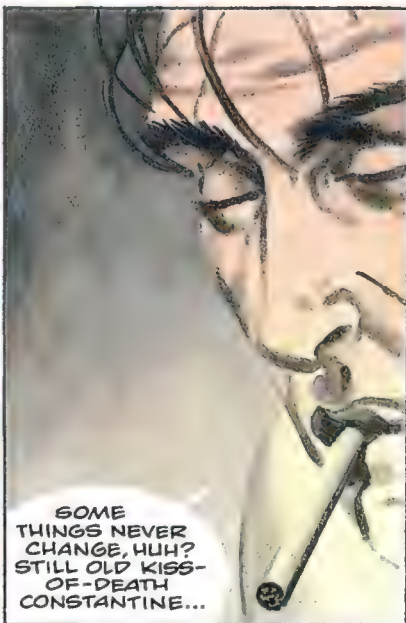
CHRIST!  
THAT WAS  
FUCKIN' BETTER  
OUT THAN IN!



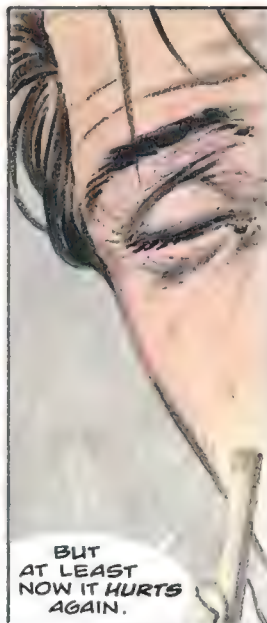
YOU SEE MY  
CIGGIES ANY-  
WHERE AROUND,  
KID..?



NO, I  
GUESS YOU  
DON'T.



SOME  
THINGS NEVER  
CHANGE, HUH?  
STILL OLD KISS-  
OF-DEATH  
CONSTANTINE...



BUT  
AT LEAST  
NOW IT HURTS  
AGAIN.

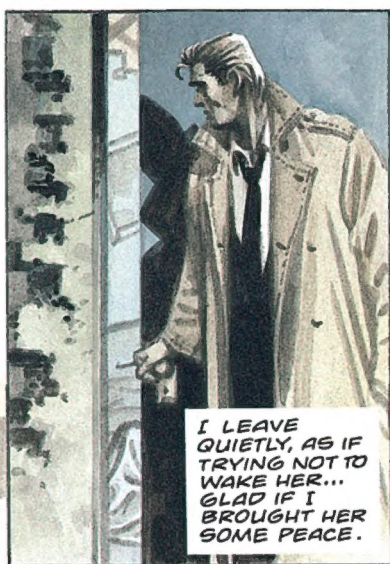




THANK  
YOU, ANGEL.  
I THINK YOU  
MIGHT'VE SAVED  
MY SOUL.



HOPE IT  
WAS GOOD  
FOR YOU,  
TOO.



I LEAVE  
QUIETLY, AS IF  
TRYING NOT TO  
WAKE HER...  
GLAD IF I  
BROUGHT HER  
SOME PEACE.



OUTSIDE, LIFE IN HELL GOES  
ON. ONLY NOW THE  
INSULATION'S STRIPPED  
AWAY, AND THE HUNGRY  
WIND OF MORTALITY GNAWS  
AT EVERYBODY'S BONES.

AND I LIKE  
THE WAY  
THAT FEELS.





GODDAMNIT,  
IT'S TRUE... I  
CARE ABOUT THESE  
FUCKIN' IMBECILES  
AGAIN, I EVEN  
CARE ABOUT MYSELF.



SO,  
WHERE  
DO WE GO  
FROM--



HUH..?



PLEASE...  
HAVE YOU SEEN  
MY LITTLE  
BOY?

I'M  
ALL ALONE  
HERE, AND  
EVERYTHING'S  
SO  
HORRIBLE...



HAVE A CIGGIE  
... I FIND  
TOBACCO  
HELPS.

THE WORLD'S  
STILL A VICIOUS,  
UGLY PLACE,  
FULL OF SAD  
SOULS BATTLING  
THE SHITSTORM  
TO SURVIVE --  
BUT I'M IN  
TOUCH WITH IT  
AGAIN.



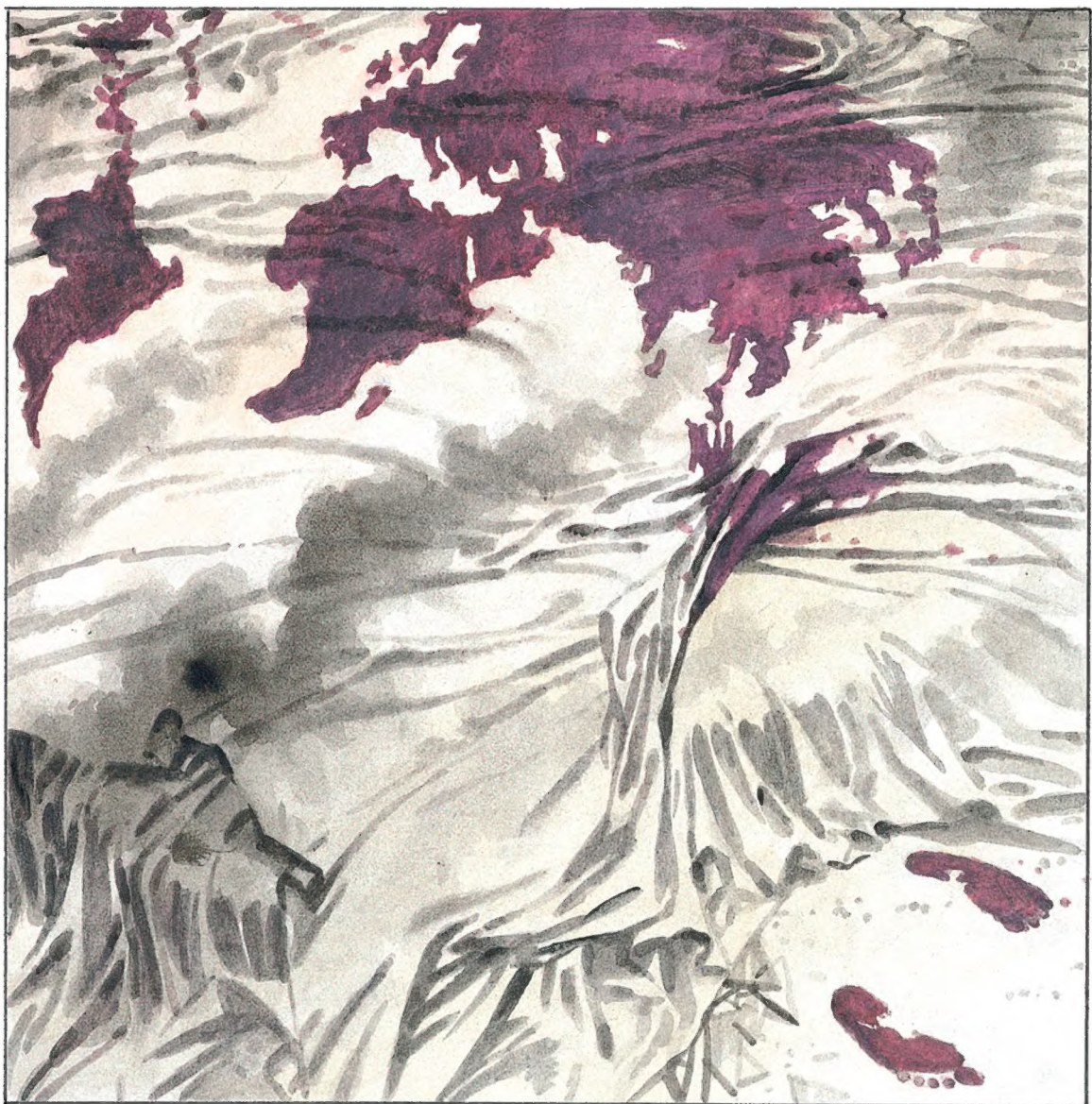
BUT I  
NEED HIM.  
HAVEN'T  
YOU SEEN  
HIM?

NO, I'M  
SORRY...



I'M DRUNK WITH A  
FERVENT, ADOLES-  
CENT PASSION FOR  
HUMAN JUSTICE...  
DRUNK WITH LO--







"THE GRUNGY URBAN HORROR OF JOHN CONSTANTINE, AS REPORTED BY JAMIE DELANO, IS AS POLITICALLY SHARP, AS STREETWISE, AND AS ENJOYABLE NOW AS WHEN IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED. IF YOU EVER WONDERED WHERE YUPPIES REALLY COME FROM, OR THE RIGHT WAY TO TALK TO A ZOMBIE, YOU'D BETTER READ THIS BOOK."

— Neil Gaiman

# To Hell and Back

IT'S BEEN A LONG AND DIFFICULT ROAD FOR JOHN CONSTANTINE — ONE THAT'S LEFT HIM WITH DEMON'S BLOOD IN HIS VEINS AND DEAD FRIENDS' VOICES IN HIS HEAD.

STILL, WITH HIS SHARP TONGUE AND UNEQUALLED SHREWDNESS, THE SORCERER FROM LIVERPOOL HAS MANAGED TO RAISE HIMSELF TO A POSITION AS RARIFIED AS IT IS DANGEROUS: BEING THE MAGICIAN OF LAST RESORT FOR A WORLD UNDER CONSTANT SIEGE FROM THE FORCES OF CHAOS AND EVIL. THAT SAME ROUGH PATH HAS ALSO SHARPENED HIS MIND, AND TAUGHT HIM A THING OR TWO ABOUT RUTHLESSNESS. NOW, WITH THE OUTCOME OF AN ANCIENT PROPHECY HANGING ON HIS ACTIONS, IT'S TIME FOR CONSTANTINE TO BRING THE SCALES OF JUSTICE BACK INTO BALANCE—AT HELL'S EXPENSE.

CONTINUING THE COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL HELLBLAZER WRITER JAMIE DELANO'S CELEBRATED RUN ON THIS SIGNATURE VERTIGO SERIES, THE DEVIL YOU KNOW REPRINTS ISSUES 10-13 AND THE FIRST ANNUAL OF THE GROUNDBREAKING TITLE AS WELL AS THE ACCLAIMED 2-ISSUE PRESTIGE FORMAT MINISERIES THE HORRORIST, ILLUSTRATED BY V FOR VENDETTA CO-CREATOR DAVID LLOYD.

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